

## Wits, Fire, and Sea

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/25270081) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/25270081>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings</a>
Category:	<a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Video Blogging RPF</a> , <a href="#">Percy Jackson and the Olympians - Rick Riordan</a> , <a href="#">Dream SMP</a> , <a href="#">Minecraft (Video Game)</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Clay   Dream/GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF)</a>
Character:	<a href="#">GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Clay   Dream (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Darryl Noveschosch</a> , <a href="#">Zak Ahmed</a> , <a href="#">Dave   Technoblade</a> , <a href="#">Wilbur Soot</a> , <a href="#">TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">F1NN5TER (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Toby Smith   Tubbo</a> , <a href="#">Floris   Fundy</a> , <a href="#">Illumina</a> , <a href="#">MegaPVP (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Other Character Tags to Be Added</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Alternate Universe - Percy Jackson Fusion</a> , <a href="#">Slow Burn</a> , <a href="#">Son of Poseidon!GeorgeNotFound</a> , <a href="#">Son of Athena!Dream</a> , <a href="#">Action/Adventure</a> , <a href="#">Enemies to Friends to Lovers</a> , <a href="#">Greek gods</a> , <a href="#">Fantasy</a> , <a href="#">Mythology - Freeform</a> , <a href="#">Sapnap is not neglected</a> , <a href="#">Magic</a> , <a href="#">Swearing</a> , <a href="#">Angst</a>
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of <a href="#">MCYT Percy Jackson AU</a>
Stats:	Published: 2020-08-04 Updated: 2021-09-30 Chapters: 20/? Words: 93651

## Wits, Fire, and Sea

by [Clichewho\\_69](#), [Cygnvs](#), [Trash\\_Kinggg](#)

### Summary

Coming to America should've been an amazing experience for George. Sure, he'd be moving an entire ocean away but there'd be no crummy teachers, no exploding toilets, and another chance to get his life together. He'd meet new people, make new friends, maybe even get a boyfriend?

That was the plan, until he suddenly gets kidnapped by a group of teenagers informing him that Greek gods, monsters, and prophecies are real and somehow all out to get him.

The cherry on top? He's the son of Poseidon, God of the Sea, and a deadbeat dad.

There's no way this summer could get any worse, right? I mean, that is until he starts to notice his kidnapper, the neon-cloaked, headache-inducing, son of Athena, is... incredibly hot.



This work has undergone major edits and revisions for your reading pleasure, and as of August 21, 2020 they were finally completed! Grammar, dialogue, and the story have changed and vastly improved so make sure to revisit those old chapters in order to enjoy this work to the fullest extent!

Slow updates (~2+ weeks)

Formerly titled: GeorgeNotFound, Son of Poseidon, and the League of Minor Gods

## Notes

\*New and improved version\*

Wasn't satisfied with the last one 0\_o

Also, to the people reading this fanfic, these are the editors who helped me with this lovely work.

Lough-ness

Maggs-posts-trash

41rfs25 (dreamnotfound-au)

Gra55

Some have tumblrs so pls check out and follow these lovely people!

Another thing, this video, "Put in your place 【 dreamteam / sleepyboys 】 "by akeiise on YouTube, was an inspiration for this fic. Check it out if you have the time.

Chapter was recently revised and re-uploaded on Aug 4, 2020. This was done to ensure a more cohesive story and less "out of character" (ooc) interactions. Please enjoy!

## Water you doing, step-bro? || George

Thunder rumbled angrily in the distance as dark grey storm clouds churned across the sky. The rain came down in buckets, pouring over roads and flooding storm drains, battling against the brave windshield wipers that were struggling to make sure their drivers wouldn't get killed.

George looked out the giant glass windows of the airport terminal and sighed. Their flight had already been delayed twelve times since they'd arrived and he doubted he was going to see the plane anytime soon.

He knew that moving was a bad idea, even the weather agreed with him. From the moment it was brought up to the day they flew out he had insisted that the move was unnecessary, and yet his parents kept reassuring him that he was overreacting and that it would be fine.

They were wrong.

It wasn't.

He had to leave his friends behind, and move to *America*, which was gross and ugly and spelled things weird. The people there would comment on his accent and try to mimic it and they would do so terribly, but he'd have to smile and pretend that it was good or he'd be pinned as an asshole that can't take a joke. The Americans didn't even have Caffè Nero, they had some sort of gross knockoff version, something something Dopey Donuts. They sucked. He'd get called a tea drinker and asked if he had braces, they're not clever, he could read right through them-

His thoughts were immediately interrupted by the feeling of cold water splattering absolutely everywhere, running down his shirt and hair and face. The lid of his water bottle spun in lazy circles on the ground a couple of metres away in a taunting manner.

George frowned. He must've squeezed the bottle too hard again with his deceptively strong noodle arm grip. Of course, it only ever happened with water.

He couldn't explain it, but ever since he was a child, him and water had always had a weird relationship. His own mum even joked that he knew how to swim before he could walk, not that he'd done much of it in the past few years. You see, water was kind of like his best friend, but a really annoying best friend. The kind of best friend that pulled pranks on you and came to your house just to track mud on the carpet, put their dirty shoes on the furniture, and raid your fridge. Sure, you love them, but that doesn't stop a smile from spreading across your face when you imagine strangling them with their own intestines.

Weird things were constantly happening when he was around water.

He remembered the time when he got in a fierce argument with one of his former teachers at his old school. It was starting to get ugly towards the end until he was told, or rather shouted at, to go to the principal's office for disrupting the class. In a huff, he picked up his belongings and left the classroom with a frown etched deeply onto his face.

As he headed towards the principal's office, he passed by the restrooms, which suddenly and inexplicably exploded, causing water and bits of porcelain to rain down. Of course at that exact moment, his shit luck decided to rear its ugly head and get all the blame pinned on him.

The school reasoned that in a display of teenage rebellion, the scrawny kid with 2 inch biceps and who had trouble opening water bottles on a good day, had blown up the entire first floor bathroom.

Forget the fact that he had no idea how he'd even go about blowing up toilets, it was literally impossible from every aspect imaginable, and yet it *still* got him expelled.

Honestly, he had always admired his mother's patience when it came to these kinds of things. No matter how many times he ended up getting in trouble, she was always quick to be an actual reasonable adult and explain why it's not possible that her seven year old son broke the glass for the shark tank display at the aquarium.

His brother too, for that matter. No matter how many water mishaps George took part in, he was the first to voice his support when George mentioned that he wanted to try out for the swim team, and was always quick to extend him an invite when he went down by the lake with his friends.

Despite all the support and the fact that George wasn't exactly one for superstitions, once the incredibly traumatic events involving water started hitting double digits, he started to slowly drift away from all things involving it.

That was until he found out his step dad was getting a promotion in America and would have to cross an entire ocean to start a new life.

Maybe he was being a bit pessimistic. Moving to a new country couldn't be all that bad if it meant that he got to leave his "troublemaker" reputation behind. No longer would he be known as "that kid" who once cannon balled into a public pool and caused the ensuing splash to drain the entire thing.

He was no longer welcome to that pool.

Jumping back to reality, George got up and grabbed a spare water bottle from his bag, shaking the remnants of his last one off his person and attempting to dry off the water still left on him.

Situations like these didn't even faze him anymore. Sitting back down, he tallied off the incident as bottle #497. He'd have to throw a party once they reached 500, get a nice cake in the shape of an exploding water bottle and have "Congrats on 500 failures, dipshit" written in buttercream icing on the top.

He checked his phone only for the screen to read a dead battery message and sighed. Maybe he should go find his brother, he promised to meet up with him a while ago and never did. The poor guy was already anxiety ridden and not showing up to meet him was definitely the best way to give him a panic attack.

He got up and began looking around the terminal, finally managing to spot his older brother near the entrance of a gift shop boasting a large array of London themed paraphernalia.

"Hey Mike! Over here!" George waved towards him.

His brother's eyes tore away from his phone screen and flooded with relief as he caught sight of him. He shoved his phone in his pocket and began sprinting over to him.

"George what the hell?! Where were you! You said you'd meet me here like fifteen minutes ago and you weren't answering any of my calls or texts! I almost got security involved!"

"I'm sorry! I lost track of time and my phone died. Next time we should all just meet up back in the seating area instead of some random gift shop."

"There is not gonna be a next time for this, I'm not letting you out of my sight again."

George rolled his eyes, his brother was always weirdly overprotective for somebody who could hardly speak to the cashier without having a nervous breakdown. His blue eyes were always darting around nervously like there was some sort of warrant out for his arrest, or maybe it was a habit he developed from that one time that a rampant serial killer almost murdered George in broad daylight while he and Mike were standing right beside a fountain. They were just throwing coins into it when the guy came up behind them and promptly slipped into the fountain and got himself a concussion. His parents had contacted the authorities and they all had to do follow-up interviews for weeks afterwards, but nobody believed him when he said that the guy had only one eye in the middle of his forehead so he eventually dropped it. Ever since then, Mike never seemed to allow himself to relax for a moment when they were in a strange new area, which was understandable but also got really old really fast.

"Oh c'mon, I'm fine! See?" he replied, spinning around to give Mike a clear view of his whole body.

"George you're covered in water."

"A little water never killed anyone," George waved him off.

"Well I hate to bring up traumatic events like this but if I recall correctly--"

"Okay that janitor didn't count, he was old and decaying anyways and he kept following me around all creepy-like," He countered and immediately felt guilty. The poor guy was dead now and he was making fun of him like some sort of asshole.

The airport loudspeaker interrupted his thoughts as it announced that their flight would begin to board passengers shortly. Mike shifted uncomfortably beside him.

"Uh George," he asked, his voice wavering, "you gonna be okay up there in the sky?"

George furrowed his brows and gave his brother a questioning sideways glance.

Mike shuffled in his spot nervously, his fingers playing with the hem of his shirt as he awaited George's response.

Realizing that Mike was probably projecting his own immobilizing fear of planes and heights onto him, he decided to take pity on the poor guy.

"Uh I don't know, I'm not too sure Mikey. I'm a little nervous of getting up there to be honest," he said, hoping that he sounded convincing enough, "do you think you can hold my hand or something so I don't start panicking?"

A look of relief washed over his older brother. He puffed his chest out and cleared his throat, "Uh, of course! You know I'm always here to protect and take care of you. Even *I'm* a little bit nervous to get on this plane," he confessed, "so don't feel too bad about it, alright?"

"Thanks Mike, I don't know what I'd do without you."

"George! Mikey!"

Turning around, George spotted his mother waving them over, her wide smile shining as brightly as ever despite the fact that she was undoubtedly filled with worry and fatigue.

"Come on boys, we don't want to miss the plane!" she said in a rush.

They head on over to her and begin making their way up the docking station. As she watched her two boys ahead, she couldn't help but feel a deep sense of unease develop in the pit of her stomach. She prayed to whatever gods were listening that they'd keep each other safe.

The closer they got to boarding, the more George's stomach began to resemble a balloon animal as it twisted itself into different shapes over and over again. He began sweating nervously as his heart threatened to beat its way out of his chest.

*Why am I getting scared? I'm not the one with a fear of heights... maybe Mike does have a point.*

Consumed by his own thoughts, George didn't notice the state his mother and brother were in. Mike's face had turned a shade of alabaster white, while his mother slowed to a halt and swallowed a lump that had begun to form in her throat.

The three of them stood there, unmoving, as their nervous thoughts plagued their minds.

That was until George's step father, ever the optimist, walked over and enveloped everyone in a giant bear hug from behind.

"Isn't this exciting?!", he shouted with a goofy grin plastered on his face, "We're gonna have so many exciting adventures in the new world, guys!"

George nodded meekly, a new thought taking root in his mind.

*I don't want to board that plane...*

A loudspeaker goes off somewhere in the airport breaking him free from his trance, "Now boarding flight 404, London to New York at gate 17."

George's heart drops.

"Yeah baby, it's showtime! Are you ready kids?" his stepfather yelled in an impressive display of energy despite the fact that he had been stuck in this stupid airplane terminal for so long that even the flowers on his Hawaiian print shirt were beginning to wilt. He grabbed their passports and pumped his fists in the air as he made his way to the gate.

"America here we come, whoop whoop!"

# My landlady kicks me out || George

## Chapter Notes

I'd love to credit maggs-posts-trash as well as dreamnotfound-au for this chapter, both from tumblr. Pls check them out!

They helped me edit and revise since my grammar is literally that of a six year old child ;-;

I'd also like to thank 41rfs25 and Gra55 for helping me out with editing this chapter.

Chapter was recently revised and re-uploaded on Aug 9, 2020. This was done to ensure a more cohesive story and less "out of character" (ooc) interactions. Please enjoy!

When they left the airport, no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't stop shaking.

Since they departed, the plane immediately went haywire, the dark grey sky, which was assured repeatedly by runway staff as "safe for take off", suddenly turned turbulent.

*Huh, who would've thought?*

They were held hostage in the sky for ten grueling hours with turbulence shaking the cabin whenever it pleased. For somebody who could hardly climb up a stepladder without his knees clacking, Mike seemed to be doing really well as he whispered words of reassurance into George's ear.

The sky had evidently decided on some impromptu target practice as lightning nearly struck their plane. If it was just once, George would've probably been fine with it. 'My plane almost got struck by lightning once' sounds like a fun party story. However 'My plane almost got struck FIFTY TIMES IN A ROW ON THE SAME EXACT FLIGHT' was a little more on par with a therapy session or a clickbait YouTube title.

It didn't take long for George to have a full on panic attack under the circumstances, which was only made worse by the fact that water bottles, soda cans, and probably the airplane bathroom blew up around him. At this rate he'd have to change his milestone party from 500 to 600. He was counting the toilets as ten points.

People began panicking and shouting all around him, overwhelming his senses, until his brother brought him close and started to sing to him.

It was the same song he sang for him every time things that weren't his fault went to shit. It was in some sort of foreign language, although Mike wasn't bilingual as far as he knew. Every time George asked about it afterwards though, he would just pretend to not know what he was talking about, however the same smirk that would appear each time as he said so told George otherwise. He figured Mike could keep his secrets about his weird German song as long as he kept singing it.

He leaned into his brother's embrace, pretending not to notice that his arms were trembling a bit, as he tried to focus on his voice. It didn't take long until the soothing melody put him to sleep. Had he

been paying attention, he would've noticed his brother emitting a soft glow in the darkness of the cabin.

When they touched down in New York, the storm clouds disappeared and the rain slowed down to a measly drizzle, filling everyone in the cabin with an undoubtful sense of relief and glee. The cheers and applause for the flight crew were sprinkled with varying thanks to God, tears of joy, calls to loved ones, and one woman with an impressive set of vocal chords that managed to screech her demands to speak to the pilot above the excitement.

His mother placed a comforting hand on his shoulder, but when he turned to look up at her, he caught her sharing a knowing glance with Mike.

He couldn't wonder about their weird solidarity for too long though, since his step dad came from behind and squeezed them all into a tight hug.

"Whelp," he began, pulling away from the embrace, "that ride sure was something... you boys okay?"

Mike nodded silently while George gave a shaky, unconvincing thumbs up.

"Great!" his step dad said cheerfully, clasping his hands together, "we're never doing that EVER again!"

Either through willful ignorance, or sheer obliviousness, George's step father didn't manage to hear the collective, "thank fucking god," that escaped everyone's mouth.

As they walked across the terminal to the luggage pick up area, he couldn't shake off the feeling that a pair of eyes were following his every move.

He scanned the airport, praying that nobody was actually there because if he did happen to stumble upon their friendly neighborhood stalker the second they set foot in America, he would shit bricks. Seeing no one, he turned back to his luggage when his eyes glanced over a guy facing him head on from a distance. His head snapped up and they locked eyes. Or rather, the equivalent of what was supposed to be the man's eyes, because past his frightening height and grossly oversaturated yellow hoodie, the guy was sporting a strange smiling mask.

George blinked and tried to focus his sights on him but-

"Oi! Gogy what's holding you up?"

"Huh?" George quickly turned away to see his brother walking towards him.

"You okay?" Mike asked with a softness in his voice.

"I mean, besides the trauma from that terrible plane ride, I'm doing pretty fine. Are *you* okay though?" He responded, deciding against mentioning the creepy cosplayer to his anxiety-filled brother.

Mike turned several shades of everything at the question, "I'm just *really* trying to forget it."

George patted him on the back sympathetically, "I feel you."

Mike turned his head to smile at George, but suddenly tensed as his vision locked onto something behind George's head.



"Hey, how about a distraction?!" George asked, oblivious to the real reason for Mike's nerves, simply assuming he was experiencing flashbacks from the plane.

"Y-yeah, that sounds like a great idea! How about you just let me carry those around for you?" He nodded towards George's luggage.

He rolled his eyes, "I can carry my *own luggage*, my arms aren't *that* weak."

A high pitched 'hmm' escaped Mike's lips as he raised his brows high, challenging George, who as a result punched him in mock offense.

"Ugh, rude," he scoffed, "fine, take the bags if you want them that badly."

He dropped a duffel bag into Mike's arms and hooked a trolley bag onto his pinky before marching off ahead of him.

"Ah-! Who's rude now?!" He struggled with the bags for a bit as he readjusted them before catching up to George in a few long strides.

As they exited the airport, they were met with the sight of their father loading the luggage into a cab and their mom waiting for them near the curbside.

"Oh, boys!," she said cheerfully, sharing a strained smile with George and Mike, *must be the jetlag*, "took you long enough. C'mon and bring your luggage over! We're finally going to see our new home!"

George and Mike nodded in unison, Mike taking the lead with the loading, allowing George to shove himself into the cab. As George got comfortable in his seat, he couldn't help but notice that his brother's usual ritual of glancing around nervously seemed a bit more frantic this time around. He didn't dwell on it for too long though, it made sense for him to be extra 'on edge' all things considered.

He leaned back in his seat and shut his eyes, determined to get just the smallest amount of sleep before they got home since the nap on the plane hadn't really done much for him.

*Today blows. Our plane almost got hit by lightning, this creepy Jason Voorhees wannabe was stalking me at the terminal, and to top it all off i'm at bottle #532, I couldn't even wait for the milestone party, cancel the Baskin Robbins order.*

As the taxi pulled out of the airport and began to drive to their new home, George flipped his position to place his head on his brother's shoulder and shut his eyes for a second time. His breathing became less frequent and his thoughts more sparse.

Right before drifting off, he heard Mike whisper in some foreign language, the same one from his songs, and it definitely wasn't German, maybe Italian? It could've been Greek for all he knew, but the strangest part was that he could've sworn he understood the entirety of what his brother was saying.

"I'm sorry George... I'm sorry Martha..."

*I must be really fucking tired* he thought, as he drifted off to a dreamless slumber for what felt like exactly three seconds before his brother started shaking him back and forth.

"George... George... GEORGE!"

He woke up in a frenzy, jumping off his brother and punching him in the shoulder.

“Hey!” Mike rubbed his shoulder with a slight wince, "what was that for?"

George huffed and rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, "you shouldn't have scared me like that while I was asleep!"

Mike rubbed his shoulder and scrunched his face in pain, "guess that ought to teach me then, I'll never wake you up ever again. Sleep forever for all I care."

George chuckled at that, causing a soft smile to make its way to Mike's face. He sighed and shook his head, bringing his hand up to ruffle George's hair playfully, though George could easily sense the anxiety rising behind his brother's smile as his eyes darted behind him and his hands shook with minor trembles.

“Mike, are you-?” George began just as the cab door opened.

“Mikey! Is Geor- oh you're awake!” His mother said with glee. " What are you waiting for? C'mon! We're finally going to see our new home!"

Her excitement would've been contagious had she not noticed the look on Mike's face.

"Mikey?," she asked softly, approaching him and rubbing small circles on his back, "do you think you can you come out of the car for me please?"

Both boys stepped out, slamming the door behind them to allow the cabbie to drive off. George looked at Mike and his mum, a wave of worry washing over him as his older brother seemingly shut down.

“George, sweetie?” His mother asked in a strained voice, “can you help your father with some boxes inside?”

Nodding before walking off, he left Mike and his mum behind as he entered the house.

The two followed him with their eyes as he passed through the front door. A tense silence fell over them as he disappeared from view, broken only by the whimper that escaped Mike's mouth.

“Mikey-?”

“It’s all my fault, Martha!” he cried, tears spilling from his eyes, "It's all my fault, I-I had so many chances, it-it's not fair to you!"

She pulled him into a tight hug, shushing him as pitiful sobs wracked his entire body.

"You-you guys have done so much for me, I c-couldn't even do the b-bear minimum for you, I couldn't even protect your son, I c-couldn't protect my *brother* !"

"You don't owe us anything Mikey, you never did. And it certainly isn't your responsibility to protect him. I am his mother, that is my job."

"B-but it's MY quest!" he yelled, pulling out of the hug to look her dead in the eyes, "THAT'S A-ALL I'VE EVER WORKED FOR! THAT'S BEEN MY ENTIRE L-LIFE'S PURPOSE SINCE I WAS SEVEN! T-THAT'S THE ONLY T-THING I'M GOOD FOR!"

"That's not true-"

"It IS," he insisted, taking another step back and balling his fists so they'd stop shaking, "if that's n-not my job then what the HELL AM I GOOD FOR? I W-WASTED MY ENTIRE LIFE ON A JOB I COULDN'T EVEN D-DO RIGHT AND NOW THEY'RE GONNA TAKE YOUR SON AWAY FROM YOU FOR IT! B-BECAUSE OF ME! DON'T YOU GET IT, MARTHA? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO *H-HATE* ME FOR THIS! T-THIS IS YOUR *SON* WE'RE TALKING ABOUT! THIS IS *GEORGE*!"

"Mikey, *please* -"

"WHY DON'T YOU HATE ME FOR THIS MARTHA? WHY? JUST GET *RID* OF ME ALREADY!" he screamed, his voice cracking, "I WAS MORE OF A HINDRANCE THAN A HELP FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE TIME I SPENT WITH YOU, FOR THE MAJORITY OF MY ENTIRE LIFE!" he collapsed to the ground and continued sobbing, "I'M A FAILURE, I FAILED MY QUEST, I FAILED MYSELF, I FAILED THE CAMP, MY FATHER, YOU AND ROBERT AND GEORGE, I HAD MY WHOLE LIFE TO PROVE MYSELF AND I-" he whimpered.

"...I failed" Mike whispered, mostly to himself, all the anger gone from his voice, replaced entirely by a soft, resounding sadness.

Martha stared down at the broken figure before her, the boy she had raised for years as her own, and felt a wave of guilt wash over her. How could she allow her son to be reduced to this? How had she not noticed? How had she allowed a place and a people that have done nothing for him except throw him into a strange home and told him to take care of a strange boy define his entire existence?

She resented that camp. Everything about it. Mike hadn't chosen to be born the way he was, and yet he was still tasked with expectations far too great for a child at the hands of the very people that were supposed to raise him and keep him safe. Mike had not failed anyone, it was the camp and her own self that had failed him.

She dropped to the ground in front of him and pulled him into yet another, even tighter hug.

Mike froze in her embrace but quickly melted into it, "Wh-why?" he asked incredulously through teary eyes, "H-how can you s-still forgive me?"

"Mikey, there's nothing to forgive," she said firmly. "I don't care what that godsdamned camp told you, I don't care how you ended up becoming a part of my family, you are my *son*. I'm not going to abandon you because you've allowed that *stupid* place to define your worth, and I'm not going to let it take *you* or *him* away from me. He's no safer working as a child soldier in that *hell hole* than he is with us. In fact, I'm sure he's ten times safer being by your side than on some *maniacal* trip for these *ungrateful* gods." she felt Mike tense in her arms at that, but continued anyways, "I love you Mikey. I love you and I am so, so sorry that I haven't made that clear enough to you."

"N-no! Martha I d-didn't mean-!"

"It's okay honey, I know."

They stayed that way on the sidewalk, rocking back and forth until Mike's crying had calmed down.

"T-thank you, Mar- Mom. Thank you, mom."

She felt tears threatening to trickle down her face, but held them back in favor of giving him a

reassuring smile, though it trembled a bit at the corners.

"No, thank *you*, Mikey. I don't say it enough."

He nodded silently, holding back a second wave of tears.

"I-I believe it's time for us to head inside," she gestured towards the house and offered Mike her arm, "shall we?"

Mike interlocked his arm with hers and donned a shaky smile, "we s-shall," he sniffled, as they walked off towards the front entrance.

As his mother and brother were conversing outside, George walked around inside the new house, unable to help but be a little disappointed. The house was beautiful, sure, with its high ceilings and art deco paintings, nothing he hadn't seen before. The mere simplicity and boredom of it all somehow brought in much needed comfort; although, it was missing something.

*Life.*

As he grew accustomed to his surroundings, he went to check out the other rooms when he saw a middle aged woman talking to his step father.

Having noticed him, he waved over for George to come and greet them.

"George!" He said with excitement, "come here and meet our new landlord- er, I mean landlady! Sorry."

The woman waved off his apology with a sharp, manicured hand.

He walked over to where his step father and new landlady were, probably discussing maintenance fees or something, and offered his hand.

Getting a closer look at her, he could see she wore dark sunglasses and couldn't get a proper look at her eyes. Her onyx hair was tied in a tight bun and the way she dressed made George question her sense of fashion.

She wore a leather jacket with a pair of black skinny jeans that hugged her legs a little too tight, in his opinion, and in everyone else that had eyes's opinion. Her t-shirt had this weird logo, probably belonging to some underground rock band, depicting a man rising from seafoam and holding a trident with what appeared to be ancient Greek scribbled at the base. That or it was just a really bad font. As he finished judging the woman, she grabbed his hand and shook it with a firmer grip than he'd expected. She definitely needed some moisturizer because her hands were practically *scaly* with how dry they were.

"Anyways," George's step father butted in, "Ms. Blaise George, George Ms. Blaise!"

The woman's mouth warped into a wicked smile as she heard George's name.

"Ah, what a handsome son you have there," she hissed with bated breath, her smile growing bigger with every word. "Although," she paused, "he doesn't quite look like-"

"He's my step son," his step-father interrupted, placing a hand on his shoulder "and might I add, that that's a very interesting observation and I'm glad to inform you that it's none of your business. It also has nothing to do with the house, so if we can move on from the subject of my son I'd appreciate that."

Ms. Blaise looked as if she'd been hit with a frying pan. Her eyebrows were raised high and her jaw hung low. She grabbed the hem of her jacket and straightened her posture, picking off pieces of nonexistent lint off from her band tee. To tie it all up, her face contorted to a more professional facade, or rather she tried to, as she looked more like she was trying to remember what she had for dinner last night with her clenched teeth and narrowed eyes.

George couldn't help it when the corners of his mouth lift up in the tiniest semblance of a smile.

Even though they weren't bound by blood, George knew he loved the man, and truth be told, he loved him more than his real father since he didn't abandon his mother when she found out she was pregnant with him. His stepdad never let anyone challenge just how close they were. Even if both kids came from different fathers, they were a family no matter what.

Ms. Blaise looked between the two of them and smiled again, foregoing her previous attempt at professionalism.

"My sincerest apologies Mr. Nolfund," she stressed, her voice shifting an octave higher, "I meant no disrespect to you or your son."

After an awkward pause, George excused himself and left the kitchen, his step dad and Ms. Blaise continued to talk about bills and homeowner fees after his step-dad accepted her apology

As he walked away, he couldn't help but shake the feeling of two eyes boring into the back of his skull, watching his every move. For the second time that day, might he add.

Eventually, Mike and his mum walked into the house and sat on the living room couches making themselves at home.

He sat next to his brother and wrapped an arm around his shoulders, squeezing him into a cozy bear hug. It went unsaid between them, but George could feel Mike tense up as he glanced at the woman standing beside his father. He hugged him tighter, knowing his aversion to strangers.

After explaining the layout of the neighborhood and some finishing remarks about the house, Ms. Blaise invited them to tour the rooms that weren't shown in the brochure, including a library, a guest room, and a spare bathroom.

Mike got up and began to follow his mom and dad but slowed down when he noticed George wasn't keeping up.

"Hey," he said raising an eyebrow, "you want to see the other rooms or-"

"No I'm fine," George quickly interrupted getting off the couch heading for the front door, "I'm just gonna check out the backyard for a bit, get some fresh air you know?"

His brother turned around and looked at George with worry etched into his face, "Are you sure? D-do you want me to--"

"No! No, it's fine," George replied hastily, "I just want to be alone for a bit."

His brother trembled a bit, his eyes darting around the room nervously, "George, I-I know you kinda want your space right now but I have a very bad feeling about you going outside on your own."

George rolled his eyes, *typical Mike*, "It'll be fine," he assured him, "I'll be sure to stay safe and call for you if anything happens."

"P-please just let me come with you," he pleaded, "we don't have to talk about anything, I promise, we could sit in silence, I'll be three feet away from you at all times if you want, just...let me be there? Please?"

George sighed, realizing that the battle against Mike's anxiety was a futile one, "Fine. Let's just get out of here already, the landlady's perfume is about to make me go nose-blind on top of my colorblindness."

His comment seemed to ease the tension, causing Mike to chuckle and lead the way to the backyard. As the door shut behind them, George laid down on the wet grass, not caring that his clothes were getting muddy and stained. He spread his arms and legs, soaking in the little bit of sun that had begun peeking out from behind the grey clouds, knowing that it would most likely disappear again soon in favor of the heavy rain the forecast had promised them.

Mike laid down beside him, the two of them falling silent as they left each other to their own thoughts. Despite being reluctant at first, George was thankful for his brother's company. A comfortable silence between two people was better than a silence alone. After about ten minutes, he felt his brother shifting beside him and cracked open one of his eyes..

"What's up?" He asked.

"Oh, nothing, just my nerves again, you know how I get," he chuckled nervously as he sat up.

"Do you wanna talk about it?"

"It's nothing crazy, I just felt like somebody was watching..." he trailed off.

"Watching...?"

Mike didn't respond, he sat frozen, staring at one of the bushes in their neighbors yard.

"Hey are you okay?" George sat up and started patting Mike on the shoulder, "Earth to Mike, Helloooo? What are you staring at?"

He squinted at the bush, but everything appeared to be normal about it.

"Is that bush bright orange or something? What's wrong with it?"

"S-sorry, it just looked a little weird for a second, like something-" he waved his hands around vaguely, "neony was running through it, but it must be my imagination again," he smiled sheepishly, "y-you know what though? I'd feel a lot better if we could go back inside now, just in case."

"Oh okay, sure, don't worry about it Mikey, we could ask the neighbors to investigate later if you wanna be extra sure."

"Thank you," he sighed, his shoulders relaxing a bit, "I, uh, just have one thing to ask you."

"What is it?"

"Do-do I," he hesitated, "Is there any grass on my ass?" he turned his head in an attempt to check his back and only succeeded in spinning around in a circle.

"Mike, both our backs make it look like we tried to make snow angels in horse shit, I don't think the grass is what's ruining the look," they both burst into laughter, and tried patting themselves off

before walking back inside.

As Mike shut the sliding glass doors behind them, he glared at the neighbors bushes, locking the doors dramatically as if to prove to them that he wasn't gonna make it easy to break in and take anything... or anyone.

"Boys? Is that you?" Their mother called from the top of the staircase.

"Yeah mum, we just went outside for a bit, Mikey got bad vibes from the neighbors shrubbery so we came back in."

"Oh good! You got to see the backyard! Make sure to take off your shoes so you don't track mud around the house and come upstairs!"

Mike and George shared an awkward glance, contemplating whether or not they should let their mother know that the shoes were definitely the least of their problems. Deciding that they actually preferred to not die at the hands of a strongly worded lecture on cleanliness, they silently agreed to not say a word and just throw their stuff in the wash the first chance they got.

"You boys can come and pick your rooms now!" Their mother declared cheerfully as they made their way up the stairs, strategically keeping their backs away from her field of vision.

"Okay sounds good!"

The three stood there in awkward silence as the boys refused to move and reveal their backs.

"Are you guys alright there?" She chuckled, "you can go on now."

"Oh, uh, yeah! Of course! Mikey, you can go first!" Said George pushing his brother forward, causing him to stumble and their mother to gasp loudly.

"MIKE WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO TO YOURSELF?!" She screeched, grabbing him by the shoulders and turning him around to assess the damage, "Oh my gods what were you DOING out there?!"

George stifled a laugh as Mike looked at him with a silent plea in his eyes. While his mother was distracted, he took the opportunity to quickly shuffle around them before sprinting to the room at the end of the hall with a maniacal laugh and locking the door behind him.

A muffled scream of "GEORGE!" called out from the other side, but he ignored it in favor of leaning against the door with his back and letting out one more breathy laugh.

He knew that he'd have to face his mother sooner or later, the jig was up, but in the meantime locking himself in was a lot funnier.

"Oh how perfect." The gravelly voice sent a chill down his spine and his head snapped upwards to see the landlady, Ms. Blaise.

"O-oh I'm so sorry, I didn't know you were in here," he chuckled in embarrassment, "I'll just leave now."

He turned around to unlock the door but found that the handle had gotten stuck.

"Ah shoot, it's jammed," he pounded on the door, "Hey! We're stuck in he-!" A scaly hand clamped over his mouth.

"That won't be necessary, *son of Poseidon*, I can see right through your facade." She hissed into his ear, "This was no accident, was it? You're either very cocky or very stupid for turning your back to the enemy, but i can guarantee that it will be the final foolish decision you'll ever make in your life. You see, you've stolen something very very precious from someone, so it seems only fair that we'd steal something back. I believe your life will do just fine, don't you agree?"

George's eyes widened in fear. Thinking fast, he jerked his head into hers, bashing their skulls together. With a howl of pain the creepy woman released her hold on him and he slithered out of her grasp, running to the other side of the room towards an open window overlooking the backyard.

"HELP!" He cried out of it, hoping that somebody in the house would hear him, although at this point he'd even settle for his neighbor's weird bushes, "THE LANDLADY'S GONE MAD!"

"YOU INSOLENT BRAT!" she spat. He whirled around to avoid a repeat of the door scenario and immediately wished that he hadn't.

The landlady's sunglasses, which had broken apart from the sheer force of his head bash, fell off her scaly face to reveal a set of grisly yellow eyes. She hunched forward as a pair of giant leathery wings burst out of her back, tearing holes into her weird band tee. The image of a middle aged woman with horrible fashion sense being replaced with that of a hideous monster with an even worse fashion sense.

"GEORGE!" he heard his brother's frantic voice as he pounded on the door to the room, "GEORGE CAN YOU HEAR ME?!"

"HELP ME!" He screamed, "SHE'S GOT FUCKING WINGS NOW!"

The door behind the landlady splintered into a dozen pieces, and before she could turn around, Mike had landed on her back, screaming profanities and bloody murder.

"NOT ANOTHER ONE OF YOU PESKY DEMIGODS!" She screeched, bucking like a bull at a rodeo.

"GEORGE GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!" Mike screamed, "GO TO MOM!"

George stood frozen in his place. Was this actually Mike? The same Mike that felt nervous while buying tickets to a pg-13 movie despite being well over the age requirement? The same Mike that needed a hand to hold when they were walking through crowds? The same Mike whose eyes would dart nervously and scan every new room they walked into? The same Mike who sang softly in a pretty language to help calm down both of their nerves when the going got rough?

"GEORGE, SNAP OUT OF IT, YOU HAVE TO RUN! GO TO MOM NOW!" Mike commanded, his voice unwavering and confident despite the snarling creature he had in a chokehold beneath him. If George wasn't already convinced that he was going completely insane, he would swear that his brother was glowing.

"Georgie please! Come to me! You're going to be fine!" His mother pleaded from the doorway, looking as though she was seconds away from sprinting into the room and hauling him over her shoulder like a sack of potatoes to get him out of there herself.

"I- urkgh," the wind was suddenly knocked out of him as he felt a strong, clawed something kick him squarely in the stomach. His head smacked against the top of the window frame and he tumbled out, free falling towards the ground below.



Meanwhile, in the backyard of the house adjacent to theirs, two demigods emerged from a neighbor's bush like wannabe npcs from Plants vs Zombies.

"Sapnap it sounds *really* bad up there, I'm going up," the masked one whispered loudly.

"Dude, no, just stop, they've got Mikey up there," he pointed his sword, a narrow bronze blade inscribed with the name 'Flameschreecher', in the direction of the scuffle, "it'd be dumb to get in the way--"

"Who *cares* if Mike's up there," the masked demigod interrupted, raised his voice, "they're not just gonna fucking *hand him over* to us on a silver platter! What next?! You want fucking *Zeus* to intervene and just drop a criminalized demigod for us out of the sky?!"

He threw his hands up in exasperation and George promptly plopped into his outstretched arms. The two demigods stared at the unconscious man in stunned silence.

"Are you fucking shitting me right now?" the first one whispered.

"NO FUCKING WAY DUDE!" Sapnap shouted, pumping his fist in the air, "DADDY Z COME THROUGH!"

"Don't fucking call him that you moron!" trying to balance the unconscious man in his arms, the masked demigod turned his head towards the scene of the window, "what the hell are we supposed to do now?"

"Uh, go back to camp? We got what we came for, mission accomplished."

"W-who..?" George asked groggily, his vision swimming and his ears ringing.

The two men turned back to look at him as his eyes wandered down to the strong arms holding him up.

"Y-you've got big hands," he slurred, then squinted at the arms again, "and an ugly shirt," his nose wrinkled in distaste.

"That's what *I've* been saying! You know Dream, it's funny how the guy that just got knocked out and is getting kidnapped has more common sense than you-."

"K-Kidnapped? N-no I don't want to do that!" he exclaimed, the fuzzy feeling in his head quickly fading away, "I-I have to go! Let me dow-!"

*Bonk*

His vision began to fade as a dull pain spread across the base of his skull.

"Sapnap, what the FUCK?!"

"Oh c'mon, you'll thank me later," a fading voice echoed.

"I need to help... help Mikey..."

The world went dark.

# Oh no, he's hot! || George

## Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for all the comments and support for this fic, I really appreciate it!

And I don't usually like to write notes, but at the same time I feel weird not writing them?

Chapter was recently revised and re-uploaded on Aug 21, 2020. This was done to ensure a more cohesive story and less "out of character" (ooc) interactions. Please enjoy!

"Ugh," George groaned as he tossed and turned, "why the fuck's this light so loud?" he wrapped a pillow around his ears in an effort to block out the incessant ringing. "Miiiiikeeey," he whined at the empty bed beside him as he tried to fall back asleep, "close the window it's too early for this!"

He waited a few minutes but received no response, grumbling, he pushed the covers off and sat up. Stretching his arms as he yawned and blinking the sleep from his eyes he paused as the room came into focus, his arms hanging awkwardly in the air.

*This isn't my room.*

He dropped his arms and looked around.

"Where the fuck-? Oh wait, we moved,"

He chuckled at himself before being hit with another realization, "WAIT! This isn't our new house! Where the hell-?!"

In an instant, all the memories came flooding back. Images of his horrible landlady, his frightened mother, and his glowing brother clinging to the back of a belligerent monster as he urged him to run away hit him full force with no time to recover. As he tried to take it all in, a second set of memories came at him, a kick to the stomach, a smack to the head, a gross yellow shirt and then another smack to the head, this one given to him by some guy who called himself a-

"KIDNAPPER?! HAVE I SERIOUSLY BEEN FUCKING KIDNAPPED?!" He screeched, leaping to his feet and frantically scanning his prison.

He spotted a door right across the room and ran towards it, yanking it open with all his might, nearly being thrown to the ground as a result, his heart pounded as he made a mad dash through the doorway only to land directly on his ass as he collided into a tight bundled mass that reminded him of the safety mats in his rope climbing classes.

"FUCK!" he cried out, rubbing his head as he winced from landing on the hardwood floors, "who puts a WALL right outside a *fucking* door-!"

"Wow," a voice above him scoffed, "I haven't even *introduced* myself and you're already calling me names".

George turned his head upwards at the voice, still massaging his thrice injured skull, and squinted at the towering figure. He gasped.

*The guy was, to say the least, very handsome.*

The stranger's dirty blond hair was tied back into a loose ponytail and a light stubble covered his well-defined jawline. Although his eyes, oh God his eyes, they were... yellow. It was like looking into endless rows of corn, George felt like he could get lost in those fields for days. The guy was wearing a pair of blue jeans that clung nicely to his legs, though he didn't get much of a chance to appreciate the view as his eyes were blinded by the man's oversaturated hoodie. No matter how hot the person wearing it was, the God awful piss-tinted monstrosity was enough to make anyone question their need for sight.

*Wait a minute, piss-tinted monstrosity... monstrosity... monster...*

"YOU'RE THAT FUCKING KIDNAPPER!" he screeched as he connected the dots, scrambling backwards, he hit his back on the bed frame painfully, "S-STAY THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME!" he held his hands up in an attempt to shield himself from the strange man, "WHAT DO YOU WANT?!"

"Can you calm down?" the man asked, rolling his eyes as he stepped into the room and shut the door behind him.

"CALM DOWN ?!" George spluttered, " YOU'VE GOT TO BE JOKING! YOU *JUST* FUCKING KIDNAPPED ME! HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO BE CALM?!"

The man sighed, mumbling under his breath, "I knew knocking you out before explaining everything would be a bad idea."

"KNOCKING ME OUT *AT ALL* WOULD BE A BAD IDEA!"

"That's true," the man conceded, "but listen, I'm sorry about Sapnap, he's not *always* that stupid, just most of the time, but he's not a bad person, I promise."

George stared at him incredulously, "Not a *bad person* ? NOT A *BAD PERSON* ?! HE KIDNAPPED ME! YOU KIDNAPPED ME!"

"Kidnapped is a very strong word, we just kinda... took you away and brought you to an undisclosed location against your will."

"DEFINE KIDNAPPING THEN!"

"Okay, look, now's not the time to get into the little details-"

"I WOULD SAY THAT *KIDNAPPING* IS A *BIG* DETAIL!"

"The point *is*, " the man cut in, glaring at him as if George was just some troublesome child, "that you're here now and you probably need a really long ass explanation that I can't give you, so I have to take you to someone who can."

"I am not going *anywhere* with you , and I'm *definitely* not going to meet any of your weirdo kidnapper friends."

"We're not-! Okay, fine, what'll it take to get you to come with me."

“Nothing, I’m not coming with you, I’m staying *here* .” George declared with an air of finality.

His kidnapper took one step forward and flinched as George let out an ear piercing shriek, pushing against the bed frame in an attempt to put more distance between them.

“NO NO NO NO STAY BACK STAY BACK !”

“I’m not going to do anything, okay? I just wanna talk.” the man reassured him and took another step forward.

“ *N-NO!* SOMEBODY HELP HELP *HELP GET AWAY FROM ME !*”

“I’M NOT GONNA DO ANYTHING TO YOU!” the man yelled back and held his arms out to both sides, “LOOK, I’M UNARMED, I HAVE NOTHING ON ME, PAT ME DOWN, YOU’LL SEE FOR YOURSELF!”

“YOU’RE LIKE *SEVEN FEET TALL* YOU DON’T *NEED* A WEAPON TO DO ANYTHING!”

“Oh my gods, *fine*, what if I put my hands inside my hoodie, that way I can’t use them, will that be better?”

George clamped his mouth shut and hesitated, “I-it *MIGHT* be, but I’m *still* not going ANYWHERE with you!”

The man huffed and tugged at his sleeves, the hem of his hoodie riding up slightly to reveal he was shirtless... and also sporting a set of toned abs. George wasn’t sure if the view made him feel better or worse.

“Is this good?” the man asked, moving his shoulders from side to side so that his sleeves flopped around uselessly.

“It’s *okay* ,” George mumbled, and then followed up with a snicker, “you look really stupid.”

“WH-! THIS IS *YOUR* FAULT!”

“OKAY! DON’T YELL AT ME!”

“I- *fine* , can I at least come closer now? I can sit down on the far side of the bed and then we can talk.”

“Okay, but I’m getting up *first* , don’t move,” he said and the man rolled his eyes again.

Without breaking eye contact, he pushed his back against the bedframe and slowly rose to his feet, taking a seat on one of the corners. He glanced at the other corner and then back at the man.

“Can I sit down *without* you making my ears bleed now?”

“Yes.”

“Thank gods,” he crossed the distance between them in two easy steps, the mattress dipping as he took a seat on the other end of the bed, “Okay so you probably have a few questions, but I’m not allowed to answer all of them, so just ask away and I’ll let you know if I can.”

“Well first of all, where the fuck am I?”

“Somewhere *much* safer than where we got you from, that’s for sure.”

“*Safer than my own home?*”

“Your *own home* was under attack, so *yes* !”

“OH MY GOD!” George suddenly leaped to his feet and grabbed the other man by the shoulders, “MIKEY WHERE’S MIKEY?!” he screeched, “HE WAS FIGHTING THAT- THAT *THING* ! HE WAS TRYING TO SAVE ME! *WHERE IS HE* ?! IS HE OKAY?!”

The man shifted uncomfortably in his seat and averted his gaze, “I- I couldn’t” he hesitated, “We didn’t have enough- we *tried* I SWEAR we did, but he- he’s not...” he trailed off and turned to look up at George, whose eyes had begun to well up with tears, “I’m sorry.”

George dropped his arms down to his side, his eyes widening with shock, “N-no it can’t be, y-you’re *lying* you’re *lying to me* you ASSHOLE!”

“George, I’m *sorry* we-”

“AHHHH!” his apology was cut off as George screamed and tackled him off the bed, pinning him to the ground as he punched his chest over and over again, “HOW COULD YOU! HOW COULD YOU LET THAT HAPPEN TO HIM?! YOU COULD’VE SAVED HIM! YOU COULD’VE AND INSTEAD YOU WERE TOO BUSY *KIDNAPPING* ME! I *TOLD YOU I NEEDED TO HELP HIM!*”

“George, *please* listen to me! It was too late when we got there, he sacrificed himself to *save* you!”

“AND YOU *LET HIM* ! WHY?!” he screamed, throwing a punch at the man’s face, only for his hand to be immediately caught as the man shrugged his left hand out and under the hoodie.

“We didn’t have a CHOICE!” he shouted back, struggling to keep George’s hand in place.

“YES YOU DID! YOU COULD HAVE SAVED HIM IF YOU JUST WENT FASTER!” George tore his fist away and swung again, this time his fist connected as it struck the man’s jaw.

“Okay, that’s *it* ,” the man spat, “I’ve had just about *enough* of you.”

In a flash, he pulled his knees up towards his chest and wrapped them around George’s torso, locking him in place before flipping him over and slamming his head to the ground.

“OW! GET THE HELL OFF OF ME!”

“YOU’RE NOT LISTENING!”

“I DON’T WANT TO LISTEN TO YOU! YOU *MURDERER* !” George shouted as his hands made a beeline for the man’s neck, grabbing onto his hoodie and pulling it over his head to blind him.

“ACK, WHAT’S WRONG WITH YOU!” the man cried out, battling it out against George in an impromptu tug of war match with his hoodie.

“YOU! WHY ARE YOU SO FUCKING HUGE?! I CAN’T BREATHE! GET OFF!”

“LET GO OF MY HOODIE!”

“LET GO OF *ME* !”

“UGH!” the man jerked his head out of the hoodie as George kept pulling it towards him,

“FINALLY! I COULDN’T FUCKING BREATHE INSIDE THAT THING!” The, now shirtless, kidnapper leaned back to take a gulp of air as George held the yellow abomination of a hoodie tightly in his grasp.

After a beat, the screams and wrestling continued as, outside the room, Sapnap made his way down the corridor, humming a quiet tune.

*Man, Dream is taking forever with that new guy, wonder what they’re getting up to.*

He stopped at the door where they left the new kid and brought his hand towards the handle, slowly turning the knob when a scream from inside made him freeze in place.

“GET OFF! I WANNA BE BACK ON TOP, YOU’RE CRUSHING ME!”

His eyes widened and he glanced at the room number. It was the right one.

“FAT CHANCE! I’M GONNA FUCKING *BRUISE* CAUSE OF YOU, YOU KNOW THAT?!”

A smile crept to his face as he recognized his friend's voice. *No FUCKING way! This is perfect!* He chuckled to himself quietly and turned the handle.

“YOU DESERVE IT YOU-!”

The door slammed against the wall as Sapnap threw it open, cutting off George’s retort as they both snapped their heads in his direction.

“Heeeeeeeey Dream- OH MY *GODS* !” he screeched, waving his arms in front of his face to obscure the view of his shirtless friend pinning the newbie to the ground, their red and sweaty faces inches away from each other as they both panted for air, “IT’S BEEN *TEN MINUTES* ! I DIDN’T THINK YOU’D GET *THAT* FAR!”

“ *WHAT?!* ” Dream screamed, his eyes almost popping out of their sockets.

“NICE JOB ON THE WHOLE CONVINCING HIM WE’RE SAFE THING THOUGH,” he yelled, waving his hand around blindly as he tried to find the door handle, “I THINK YOU’RE A LITTLE *TOO* GOOD AT IT!”

“ *WHAT?!* ” George echoed Dream’s cry, “ABSOLUTELY NOT!”

“I-IT’S FINE GUYS, I’LL JUST TELL THEM YOU’RE, LIKE, BUSY OR SOMETHING!” his hands finally found the knob and he pulled it towards him, “SORRY FOR INTERRUPTING, HAVE FUN!”

“SAPNAP WAIT, IT’S NOT-!” Dream called after him, arm outstretched as the door slammed shut. He sighed heavily and turned back to George who had a horrified expression etched onto his face, “Uh, sorry about him?”

“GET OFF ME *NOW* !” he yelled, pushing both hands against the man’s bare chest as he finally got off. George scrambled to his feet and threw the door open, “SNAPSNAP WAIT!”

“George I need-”

“NO, *YOU* STAY BACK!” he yelled, pointing his finger at the shirtless Dream before aiming it at himself, “ *I’m* going to explain to your kidnapper friend that I didn’t develop any Stockholm Syndrome.”

With that, he tore out of the room and slammed the door shut, leaving Dream alone with a dying call of, "I need my fucking shirt."

George turned his head left and right, catching the receding figure of a man turning a corner at the end of the hall.

"SNAPMAP! HOLD ON!" he yelled, chasing after him, rounding the corner right behind him.

*What the fuck is this guys name anyways?*

"I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I DIDN'T MEAN TO WALK IN!" Claptrap yelled back at him, "I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A *LITTLE* SCARRING AND *REALLY* FUNNY BUT IT WAS ACTUALLY *REALLY* SCARRING ONLY A *LITTLE BIT* FUNNY! *PLEASE STOP CHASING ME !*"

"NO, WAIT, IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK *I SWEAR !*" George's cries fell on deaf ears as Snapple threw himself down a flight of stairs and came crashing to the ground painfully.

George stood at the top of the staircase and winced, staring at the groaning man as he rubbed his back and rose to his feet.

"Are you okay?" he called down to him.

"Yeah, just give me a second," Simpnap groaned, "Owww, that was such a bad idea."

George nodded in agreement and carefully made his way down the stairs, trying not to alert the other of his approach. He made it about five steps before one of the boards creaked under his feet and Sapling's eyes shot open.

"I'M SORRY I'M SORRY PLEASE DON'T KILL ME!"

"I'M NOT GONNA KILL YOU, YOU DIDN'T INTERRUPT ANYTHING!"

"GEORGE CAN YOU PLEASE GET BACK HERE I NEED YOU!" Dream's voice rang out from the end of the hall.

"OH MY GOD! SHUT! UP!" George's eye twitched as he snapped his head to bark at him, "Snapnap, I swear, it's not-"

"*PLEASE!*" Dream cried.

"GO AWAY!"

He turned to look back at Snowcap, but the man had taken the opportunity to escape, tearing down the hall and dashing through an open doorway.

"George seriously I-" Dream began, his shirtless figure at the top of the staircase.

"I SAID GO AWAY ! SNIPSNAP, LET ME EXPLAIN!"

He chased after him through the open doorway only to come to a screeching halt as everyone in the room turned to stare at him. He stood frozen in an awkward half-running position, staring back silently and hoping that something would hit him on the head again to knock him out.

"Are you alright, my boy?" an insanely tall, older-looking man asked, his eyes twinkling with kindness and a smile that George could hardly see past a thick brown beard that graced his face.

George gulped and nodded, “Uh y-yeah I’m fi-ha HA?! WHAT IS *THAT* ?!” he screeched pointing a shaky finger at the lower half of the man, who instead of having a normal pair of legs sported the body of a snowy white stallion, “Y-YOU’RE A FUCKING *HORSE* !”

“The term you’re looking for is centaur,” the man said patiently, his hoof pawing at the floorboards beneath him, “I am only *part* horse, as you can see the top half of me,” he gestured towards his torso, “is man.”

“R-right, okay, that’s fine, haha,” he chuckled through gritted teeth, “That’s it, I’ve gone insane! This weirdo kidnapper drugged me! I’m hallucinating, there’s a horse man talking to me-”

“George-” the weight of a hand being placed on his shoulder snapped him out of his rambling and he jumped nearly a mile high.

“YAHHHHHH WHAT IS *WRONG* WITH YOU?!” George screeched, swatting Dream’s hand off his shoulder.

“Can you just *listen* for a second?!”

“WHY THE HELL ARE YOU STILL SHIRTLESS?!”

“BECAUSE *YOU* STILL HAVE MY SHIRT!” Dream shouted, gesturing to the forgotten hoodie held tightly in George’s grasp.

George glanced at the piss-colored cloth in his hands and grimaced, throwing it at Dream’s face, “You could’ve just asked for it *back* you *weirdo* .”

“I DI-! Ugh, forget it,” he huffed, throwing the hoodie over his head and slipping his arms through the sleeves.

“Trouble in paradise, Diego?” a man in a tacky Hawaiian shirt sporting a 5 o’clock shadow snorted from across the room, belching as he took a swig from one of the many cans of diet coke littering the round table before him. The horse man frowned at him, but didn’t say anything.

“Hardly,” Dream quipped, rolling his eyes.

The man wiped his mouth with the collar of his Hawaiian shirt and sighed contentedly, “So who’s your boyfriend?”

“OH COME *ON* !” George yelled.

“He’s *really* not my boyfriend,” Dream grimaced, glancing over George, who looked like he would burst any minute now.

“Fling then,” the man shrugged, taking another sip.

Dream huffed, resigning himself to the title, “His name’s George, he’s the son of- uh- you know- the guy.”

“Mmmm,” he nodded through his drink, “ *That* asshole, got it.”

“ *Excuse* me?! Son of *what* asshole?!” George demanded, “How DARE you! DO YOU EVEN FUCKING KNOW WHO MY PARENTS *ARE* ?! THEY’RE THE GREATEST PEOPLE ON THIS GODDAMN PLANET! IN FACT, THEY’RE PROBABLY WORRIED SICK ABOUT ME RIGHT NOW BECAUSE OF *YOU* ASSHOLES-!”



“He’s *not* talking about your parents.” Dream assured him, “at least not *those* parents.”

“Yeah Giorno, don’t get your panties in a twist,” the diet coke man snickered, “I was talking about your old man.” he brought the can to his lips again and frowned when he realized it was empty.

“My *dad* ?”

“Yeah your fuckin dad, who else?” He flattened the empty can into a disc and threw it over his shoulder, “I don’t give a shit about your other parents, whoever they are, I have no reason to call *them* assholes.” He held his hand out and a fresh can of diet coke appeared in it.

George’s eye twitched at the casual magic and he turned to look at Dream, “What the *fuck* is this place?”

“This, my boy, is Camp Halfblood!” the horse man explained, spreading his arms out in a welcoming gesture, “the home away from home for children like you.”

“Children like *me* ?” George echoed as he wrinkled his nose.

“Yeah, if you haven’t noticed you’re not exactly normal, kiddo,” the diet coke addict chuckled.

“*I’M NOT EXACTLY NORMAL?!*” he spluttered, “LOOK AT ALL OF YOU! *YOU’RE* SOME SORT OF SODA SUMMONER, *YOU’RE* A HORSE MAN, AND *YOU’RE* A FUCKING KIDNAPPER! AND KNAPSACK, WHEREVER THE FUCK HE IS, IS *ALSO* A KIDNAPPER BUT WORSE BECAUSE HE KNOCKED ME OUT!”

“IT WAS BECAUSE YOU WERE STRUGGLING!” a voice piped up from behind the horse man.

“*THERE YOU ARE!* ” he yelled as Napsap screeched, diving under the table to shield himself from George.

“George, *calm down!* ” Dream hooked both his arms around George’s, lifting him up off the ground as he kicked and struggled.

“NO! GET *OFF* ! I JUST REMEMBERED THAT HE KNOCKED ME OUT, I TAKE BACK WHAT I SAID BEFORE, I AM GOING TO KILL YOU!”

The horse man sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose in exasperation as diet coke man laughed at the scene.

“MR. D SAVE ME! TURN HIM INTO A GRAPE OR SOMETHING!” Samsung cried, clinging to the man's leg underneath the table.

“Eh, get off me brat!” Mr. D snapped, kicking him off while spilling some of his precious diet coke on Simpson, “and that’s a no-can-do on the grape thing, the old ass’s still got me on probation for all wine related powers, I mean *come on* you fool around with *one fox* and suddenly you’re exiled for fifty years!” he huffed and turned to the horse man “Can you believe the audacity?”

The stallion grimaced at the question, as though he’d heard it countless times before and desperately wished he had never heard it at all, “No, I cannot believe.”

As the screams continued, and Mr. D was just about to summon his third can of coke, a door behind the horse guy swung wide open and everyone froze.

“Hey guys, I’m back!” a happy-go-lucky voice chirped in from the doorway, “Chiron, I brought the things you needed- Oh! What’s goin’ on over here?”

A guy with glasses and a black hoodie stood at the entrance to the living room with several papers and folders in his arms. Everything about him screamed ‘good’ and ‘nice’, from his bouncy chestnut hair, to his bright, kind eyes, to the plenty of freckles that dotted his face.

Mr. D and Chiron eyed the other three as Sims4 and Dream murmured vague apologies under their breath. Dream released his hold on Goerge and he dropped to the ground in a heap.

“Dream! You’ve hurt him!” the new guy scolded, dropping the papers in his hand onto the table and rushing forward to help George stand, “Are you okay?”

“Pff, no,” George scoffed as he was pulled to his feet.

“Awww why?” the guy asked with genuine concern.

“Well I was just fucking *kidnapped* that’s for one.”

“Ah! Language!”

“Oh-uh- sorry?”

“Cursing is *off limits* !” the guy declared, “right guys?”

“Yeah George! Watch your language!” Soupcan remarked from underneath the table.

“Sapnap, why are you down there?” the new guy asked.

*SAPNAP! That’s what it was! Oh my god.*

“Because George wanted to kill me!”

“George, that’s not very nice!” the man reprimanded, reminding George of his mother when she caught him and Mike in a fight.

“He knocked me out and kidnapped me *first!* ” George whined.

“Sapnap! Is that true?!”

“Wh-! *NO!* HE’S LYING!”

“AH-! *YOU’RE* THE ONE LYING RIGHT NOW! Dream, tell him, tell him how you and Sapnap kidnapped me.”

“ *Dream?!* ” the boy’s eyes were practically bugging out of his head as he turned to look at Dream.

“Uh, Bad *look* ,” he stammered, rubbing the back of his neck, “we *may* have done something like that, but it was for a *task* okay? Chiron told us to!”

“I do not appreciate being blamed for such actions,” Chiron admonished, “and I believe that this conversation has gone on long enough, there is much that we must explain to George about his current situation, and easing him into the topic may take quite a while.”

“I don’t need to be eased into *anything* !” George exclaimed, as he began listing off the horrible things that have happened to him since he got to America, “I got stalked by a weird mask man that

turned out to be my *kidnapper* , my landlady literally turned into a monster and *killed* my brother, the masked man had me *pinned to the ground* upstairs five minutes ago,”

The entire room cringed at the last statement as George carried on, unperturbed, “meanwhile my *other* kidnapper, who knocked me out, is confused as to why I want to *kill him* , *this guy* sounds like my *mum* , THIS GUY can make diet coke appear out of the air and *YOU’RE A HORSE MAN!* So I think you can pretty much tell me *anything* and I’d be FINE!”

“Very well then,” Chiron sighed, “you are a demigod,” he revealed rather bluntly, “and your father is Poseidon, God of the Seas.”

# Oh my gods || George

## Chapter Notes

Tough-less, follow her on tumblr as well as my editor dreamnotfound-au, who without them this fic wouldn't be possible, give them a quick view if you like dnf AU's and incorrect quotes.

Tbh I got nothing else.

Chapter was recently revised and re-uploaded on Aug 21, 2020. This was done to ensure a more cohesive story and less "out of character" (ooc) interactions.

Enjoy!

A smile crept onto George's face as he tried to stifle a laugh while glancing at the dead-serious expressions of everyone in the room. Nonetheless, a small chuckle slipped out of his mouth before it devolved into a full blown laughing fit, he doubled over, tears streaming down his face as he howled at the absurdity of it all.

"George are you...?" Dream asked, placing a hand on his shoulder.

"OH MY GOD YOU GUYS SERIOUSLY HAD ME GOING THERE FOR A SECOND!" he cackled, patting away the hand on his shoulder in a friendly gesture, "YOU GUYS LOOK SO SERIOUS OH MY GOD LOOK AT YOU AHA!"

"Chiron we broke him, he's gone insane," Sapnap whispered from underneath the table.

"AHHH AND THAT EXPLAINS ALL YOUR IDIOTIC NAMES! DREAM?! SAPNAP?! DIDN'T YOU GUYS CALL THIS ONE *BAD* BEFORE? THAT'S NOT EVEN A NAME! IT'S AN ADJECTIVE!"

"It's short for BadBoyHalo-"

"*BADBOYHALO?!* " George screeched, "OH MY *GOD* THIS WHOLE PRANK WAS SO ELABORATE AND WELL MADE BUT THEY COULDN'T EVEN COME UP WITH *NORMAL* ALIASES FOR ALL OF YOU?! Okay, I have to know, what was the story you were planning on using to explain those? That's too fucking funny!"

"Language!" Bad remarked, though with slightly less enthusiasm.

"Dude, you could drop your character now, it's fine, I got it, I've been pranked!" he wiped a tear from his eye and sighed, "Whew! And I *genuinely* believed you guys! This was so good! I have to ask though, how'd you get that horse bottom to move and stuff, that's really cool! And that diet coke trick! Really neat, it would probably work better if you could 'summon' more than just one type of drink though."

"Oh c'mon you *brat!* You really think I can't summon whatever I want?!" Mr. D challenged, holding out his arm as a water bottle materialized in his grasp.

“What?! That’s so cool!” George gasped, “Is it real?!”

Mr. D grumbled and chucked the water bottle at his face, nailing him directly in the forehead as George cried out in delight.

“It’s REAL! Dream, it’s *REAL*! You already knew that though, you’re in on all this too, right? Oh I should’ve KNOWN the second I saw you that this was all a huge prank, no kidnappers are *actually* that hot when they take off their masks, that’s a thing that only happens in movies!”

Dream looked torn between indignant and flattered as he and Sarnap exchanged confused glances while George laughed away, “Oh and the *landlady*! MIKEY! MUM! You got *all* of them in on it! Was this to make me feel better about the move or something? Because I honestly really needed that laugh, this was great! Okay so where are the hidden cameras? Is one of these walls fake?”

He dashed over to the wall closest to him and kicked it with all his might, wincing as pain flared up his leg, “OW! Okay, so not that one, but which one is it!”

The members of the room shifted uncomfortably, hushed questions bouncing around between them.

“C’mon guys it’s *okay* I fell for it! It was a really well made prank, I just wish it had *you know* a little *less* emotional and physical trauma, and a little *more* of the shirtless guys, but other than that 10/10, honestly-!”

“George, this isn’t a prank.”

George’s smile faltered slightly before it came back, full force, “Oh okay, I get it I get it, you still have more to the gimmick, right? So you can’t break character yet! That’s fine, I can play along.”

“No, George, seriously, this isn’t a prank! Mr. D, summon something else! Show him!” Sarnap demanded, pointing at the cheetah printed man from below.

“Eh? Why don’t you just have Chiron here *kick* some sense into the brat, I’m not doing anything for him.”

“Oh that’s a good excuse, really feeling the character there, are you a method actor?”

“Oh fuck *off* Jolyne, you wanna see some real magic?! I’ll show you real magic.”

“What? Are you *finally* gonna turn me into a grape?” George snorted.

“Nah, I’ll do you one better, fish boy, you like the sea, don’t you?” he leaned forward in his chair, the laid back attitude suddenly gone, replaced with an intimidating aura. George could’ve sworn he saw a faint bluish haze surrounding the man as the smell of grapes hit his senses. In the mist, he saw images of thick curling vines, strangling fleets of men as they struggled to escape them, ships capsizing and passengers flinging themselves overboard as the thick brambles latched onto them and dragged them to their watery graves.

George gulped and chuckled nervously, “Uh y-yeah, the ocean’s really nice, it does get kinda weird there though sometimes…”

“Oh don’t worry kid, you’re gonna *love* the sea when I’m through with you. You could say that your *life would depend on it* .”

“ *OH* shit! You’re gonna do the thing! Get ‘em Mr. D!” Sarnap hollered, pumping his fist in

excitement.

“Language!”

Chiron cleared his throat, “I do not believe that it would be wise to do so, you do not wish to anger the sea god, do you?”

Mr. D shot him a glare and grumbled some choice curse words under his breath as he lay back down, “Eh you lucked out kid, your old man’s a piece of shit, he’d get dad to sentence me to another fifty years down here.”

“Yeah, I’m sure I did,” George rolled his eyes.

“Okay THAT’S IT!” Mr. D stood abruptly, the chair clattering to the ground behind him, “I’ll fuckin *show you* ! Shake Shack! GET UP!”

“M-ME?! WHAT’D I DO?” Sappnap yelled, clinging to the table leg as though his life depended on it.

“I SAID GET UP! YOUR NEW FRIEND HERE NEEDS SOME CONVINCING, RIGHT? THIS OUTTA CONVINCE HIM!” He pulled the screaming Sappnap out from under the table by the collar of his tee, “SHUT YOUR ASS UP! WATCH AND LEARN, GIORNO!”

In an instant, Sappnap’s sobs turned into squeaks as his body and limbs contorted into a new shape. George watched in horror as his face elongated and his arms shortened, the clothing on his body fusing into his greying skin as the image of a once crying man transformed into a dolphin, flopping around uselessly on the hardwood floor.

“H-HOLY SHIT! THAT’S A REAL FUCKING DOLPHIN!” The dolphin squeaked in agreement as it’s flippers smacked against Mr. D’s sandals.

“YEAH IT FUCKIN IS! YOU GOT SOME SORTA EXPLANATION FOR *THIS* ?!” He spat, glaring at him.

“N-NO BUT I’M HOPING THAT YOU DO BECAUSE IF ALL OF THIS IS REAL THEN I MIGHT PASS OUT AGAIN!”

“THEN GET YOURSELF NICE AND COMFY ON THAT FLOOR *BRAT* BECAUSE IT’S *ALL* REAL!”

“HOW?!”

“MAGIC, MOTHERFUCKER!”

With that he picked the chair up off the floor and plopped into it, leaving George with his jaw on the ground and the rest of the room held in a tense silence. Bad picked up the water bottle that had lay forgotten on the ground and poured it on top of Dolphin Sappnap *Dolphnap? Saphin?* who was still squeaking and flopping around on the floor.

“Yeah, that should wear off in a bit, just throw him in the stream so he won’t dry out,” Mr. D muttered through his drink, nodding towards the front door.

Bad struggled to lift the dolphin as the rest of the group stared in silence, a flipper hit him in the face and knocked his glasses off as he dragged Sappnap out the still open front door and into the apparent stream right outside. The door slammed shut behind them and everyone turned to look

back at George, gauging his reaction.

“S-so this is all real.” he stated, glancing at the faces of the remaining freaks, “Aaaalllll of *this!* Is REAL!”

Chiron and Dream nodded as Mr. D snorted into his coke can.

“Pff-okay!” he spluttered, “S-so what *now* ? What the hell does all of this *mean* ?”

“It means that your little ‘greek myths’ are actually *all true* ! Isn’t that a fun and original plot for a story?!” Mr. D snarked, chuckling as George’s eye twitched at the new information.

“S-so *that’s* who you meant by Poseidon? Like, the *actual* sea god from greek myths? You’re trying to tell me that he’s my *dad* ?”

“Yeah, sucks to be you, your old man’s a *bitch* .”

“Not everyone in this room is immortal, please refrain from angering one of the Big Three.”

Chiron sighed and then turned to George, “But yes, your father is Poseidon, god of the sea, which means that you, my boy, are a halfblood.”

“Halfblood? That’s what you called this- this *camp* before, right? You said it was called Camp Halfblood and it was for ‘children like me’, so does that mean everyone here is this guys kid?”

“HA!” Mr. D cackled, “ *Piss* eidon isn’t *allowed* to get *that* much action, not like he could if he tried to anyway, him and the other two big guys had to have some restrictions put on them because their kids were fucking insane! Nah, the other brats here are kids of *other* gods.”

“Oh, of course, duh, *other* gods, how could I forget,” George chuckled dryly.

“Yeah, Dolphin boy is the son of Hephaestus- the ugly one, Brad is the son of Apollo- the narcissist, and your ‘too hot to be an actual kidnapper’ *not* -boyfriend is the son of Athena- the smart one.”

Dream cringed at his new title, “Can we not?” he muttered.

“Wait wait, so all of those names are your *actual* names,” he paled, “I just insulted *every single one of them* ! Is it an american thing? Are these american names? Mikey’s american why’s *his* name normal?!”

“Technically he *also* has a really weird name, you just don’t know it,” Dream chimed in, “They’re not our *real* names, but they might as well be. They’re just, like, badges of honor, we get them from completing quests.”

"Dream is correct," Chiron nodded, "they are titles used in combat so that monsters and gods alike cannot easily turn your name against you. They're usually earned after a significant quest and are named after notable events one partakes in. They're a badge of honor and respect, especially within the camp."

“Okay so-”

“Eh, I’ve had just about enough of all your questions, kid,” Mr. D grumbled, cutting him off as he flattened another soda can disc, "you obviously don’t know jack SHIT about Greek mythology, Chiron are you *sure* that *this* is the so-called 'savior of Olympus'?"

“Savior of *WHO?!* ”

“There he goes off again,” Mr. D sighed.

“Look, *Mr. D,*” George spat venomously with newfound vigor, “I never *asked* for any of this, do I really have to *list* everything that’s happened to me since I got here *again?!* Why the fuck SHOULD I know anything about your boring ass stories from a trillion years ago that people *made up* to explain how the world works? There’s NO POINT! So *sorry* for not being an expert on it, but if you want me to be able to work through your weird camp then I need to ask some questions!”

“Chill out, *Giorno,*” Mr. D rolled his eyes, conjuring the nth can of diet coke from thin air, “I didn’t say your questions won’t be answered, I’m just tired of fucking hearin ‘em, you sound like a damn idiot,” he popped open the can, “why don’t we get little miss shirtless to show you around and explain everything? It’s not *our* fuckin job to teach you the ins and outs of all of this, that was for your *guardian* to do, he musta been *shit* considering what *you* know. What was his name again? Bike? Sike? I don’t care.”

“OKAY THAT’S FUCKING IT!” George leaped at the smirking bastard as Dream held him back by the arms, “LET ME GO! FUCK YOU MR. DOUCHEBAG! MR. DICKHEAD! GIMME ANOTHER D INSULT!”

“GEORGE YOU CAN’T PUNCH A GOD!”

“THIS GUY’S A GOD?! WHAT IS HE, THE GOD OF BEING AN ASSHOLE?!”

“I mean, among other things,” Dream conceded as George’s flailing arms hit him in the face, “still, you *saw* him turn Sapnap into a dolphin, is this really a fight you wanna get into?”

“YES!”

“Okay, we’re leaving, have a nice day *Chiron .*” he glared at Mr. D, and with that, he threw George over his shoulders like a sack of potatoes, bending over to pick up Bad’s forgotten glasses from the ground before marching out the front door and slamming it shut behind them.

Chiron sighed and turned away from the door, eyeing Mr. D, “I do believe that that last comment was uncalled for.”

“It’s *true* though,” Mr. D mumbled into his can.

“Still, it is unwise to speak ill of the dead,” he remarked, picking up the papers from the table and turning towards the doorway, “I believe I must attend to some other duties, please make sure that the cans make their way to the recycling bin.” He said, knowing full well that the cans would stay where they were.

As he walked away he heard Mr. D mutter quietly under his breath, “Do you think we’ll be alright? With a kid like *him* ?”

He paused in his steps and turned to look out the window, where George was still kicking and screaming from Dream’s shoulder.

“We can only hope.”



# Emotional Constipation and Bunking Devastation || George

Chapter by [Cygnavs](#), [Trash Kinggg](#)

## Chapter Notes

I'd like to thank my editors, 41rfs25 and Grass, for making this chapter possible. Go check put 41rfs25 on tumblr as dreamnotfound-au.

Chapter was recently revised and re-uploaded on Aug 21, 2020. This was done to ensure a more cohesive story and less "out of character" (ooc) interactions. Please enjoy!

"Put me DOWN already!" George screamed as he kicked Dream in the chest.

"You're not gonna run away and try to fight Mr. D?"

"NO just PUT ME DOWN!"

"If you say so," he shrugged, and dropped him to the ground with about the same amount of care he'd show a garbage bag.

"OW! What the FUCK?!"

"Sorry," he rolled his eyes unapologetically, before his gaze caught on to something straight ahead, "There he is! HEY, BAD!" he called waving his arms in the air as he dashed towards the boy.

"Hey wait for me!" George struggled to his feet and sprinted after him.

At the sound of their voices, Bad turned around his face lighting up in a smile as he noticed Dream approaching him, "Hey Dream! Did you guys finish up in there?"

"Yup! But now I'm stuck babysitting," he chuckled as George caught up to them and gave an indignant cry, "where's Sapnap by the way?"

Bad opened his mouth to respond but was cut off by a bunch of irritated chitters from behind him.

*"I'm right HERE, this water is SO GROSS!"*

"Um hello?" George asked, as they all turned to look at the angry dolphin who was splashing away in the stream and shooting accusatory glances at George.

*"This is all YOUR fault you jerk!"*

"Wh-! MY fault?"

*"YES your fault! WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST BELIEVE HIM?!"*

"BECAUSE HE WAS SAYING MAGIC AND GREEK MYTHOLOGY WAS REAL AND I'M NOT CRAZY OR DELUSIONAL!"

*"WELL LOOK AT YOU NOW!"*

"YEAH, LOOK AT ME NOW! AT LEAST IM NOT A STUPID DOLPHIN!"

*"AT LEAST I DONT LOOK DUMB IN FRONT OF EVERYONE TALKING TO A STUPID DOLPHIN!"*

"Wait, what?" He turned to look at Bad and Dream who wore similar expressions of 'what the fuck?' though in the case of Bad it was probably more like 'what the muffin?', "Can you guys not hear him?"

"Uh no?" Bad responded, shaking his head, "but I guess *you* can, that's funny."

*"It's probably because of your dad, right?"*

"Sapnap says it's because of my dad."

Dream chuckled, "Wow Sapnap, you're pretty smart as a dolphin, maybe we should keep you that way."

*"George I can't come up with something good right now but pretend like I said something really insulting."*

"SAPNAP!" George gasped in fake horror, putting his hand to his heart, "I can't *say that* !"

"Wha-! What'd he say?!" Bad demanded, "LANGUAGE, Sapnap! Being a dolphin is no excuse for being a potty mouth!"

"Yeah Sapnap, that was more like a *sewer* mouth though that was *so mean* !"

*"George I love you, thank you, I forgive you for making me a dolphin, pretend I said sorry."*

"He says he's sorry."

"Awww, it's okay!" Bad smiled.

"Wait, is he saying sorry to Bad or to *me*! I deserve an apology!" Dream exclaimed indignantly.

*"Tell him no."*

"No."

"Fine! Maybe I'll just tell the naiads that there's a stray dolphin hanging around here then! I'm sure they'd be *thrilled* to-"

*"OKAY OKAY I'M SORRY I'M SORRY!"*

"Was that a sorry?" Dream asked.

George shot Sapnap an evil smirk, "No, he said to shut up."

*"GEORGE WHY?!"*

"OKAY okay let's just all settle down!" Bad cried, "Dream, don't tell the naiads, that's mean, they'll drown him, and Sapnap apologize to Dream."

*"I said I'm sorry George is just being a meanie."*

"He said no."

*"GEORGE!"*

"I don't know if I really believe you," Bad raised his eyebrow, "I think Sapnap would say sorry, so I'm just gonna pretend like he did."

*"Bad I love you, George, I take it back, I don't love you, you're a jerk."*

"Sapnap you're so mean to me," George sighed sadly.

Dream huffed, "Okay, let's just get back to what we were doing, I came here for a reason," he shoved his hands into the pockets of his hoodie and pulled out a pair of wiry glasses.

"My glasses!" Bad gasped, snatching them from Dream's palm and quickly affixing them to his face, "Oh that's *so* much better! Sapnap, you're really lucky you didn't break them." He scolded.

*"I'm sorry, I can't control the flipper."*

"I'm just gonna head off and start showing George around camp," Dream said.

"Ooohhh take him to the cabins first! That way he'll know where he's staying tonight!"

"That's a good point, you up for some cabin touring?"

"Uh sure, that's fine," George said cautiously.

"Oh don't worry, you'll love it there!" Dream assured him, clapping him on the back, "you're going to the Hermes cabin, you'll get to meet all the Hermes kids and a few unclaimed campers too."

"Hold on, unclaimed?"

"Ohhh boy," Dream huffed, "let's just head off, I'll explain it on the way, bye guys! Good luck Sapnap!"

*"Thanks!"*

"Bye!"

And with a wave to both, they trudged off, following the direction of the stream as Dream led the way and explained the concept.

"Okay so once you get to camp you don't always ACTUALLY know who your godly parent is, they gotta *claim* you, they basically have to show a sign that goes 'yup this one's mine' and then that kid gets to go to their respective cabin."

George nodded, "okay, I get it, so if they're unclaimed that means their parent still didn't show a sign for them."

"Exactly," Dream confirmed "Since Hermes, among other things, is the god of travelers, he lets everyone unclaimed hang out at his cabin. However, because of his *overwhelming* generosity, the place has become *really* crowded, you'll be lucky to find a spot on the floor to sleep on, much less a bed."

"Well then it doesn't *sound* like I'm gonna 'love it there', shouldnt guests get priority or something?"

"Pff, yeah, try telling *that* to all the kids that've been fighting tooth and nail for their bunkbed privileges for YEARS, let's see how that goes for you."

George sighed, "Okay I get it, yay floor time," he whooped half-heartedly as Dream chuckled.

They continued the rest of their walk in silence, neither speaking until a cluster of cabins began to emerge over the grassy hills.

"Actually, on second thought, let's take a slight detour to catch you up to speed."

Dream sidestepped towards a shady grove and sat down. He patted the ground beside him, inviting George to come sit next to him.

"So," he said sizing George up, "tell me everything you know."

George paused, *What do I know?* He knew some monsters like Medusa and the Minotaur, as well as the Big Three, but everyone knew that. He racked his brain trying to think of anything from his 13 years of schooling, but nothing came through.

"Honestly," he admitted, "I only know Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus-"

A booming thunder resonated through the cloudless sky.

Dream flinched, "JEEZ relax!" He called towards the skies, "I forgot to tell you, names hold power."

"They what?"

" *HOLD. PO-WER.* " Dream repeated, emphasizing each syllable with a smack to his palm, "Gods and monsters that don't exactly like you won't be too happy with you throwing around their name like it's nothing. You *gotta* show them respect, even if you don't like them that much. That's what our funny names are *for* by the way, if they don't know our names they cant use them against us or to identify us, that's what Chiron meant before."

"Dream, I'll be honest with you, I'm having kind of a hard time believing all of this shit."

Dream shrugged, "you can choose to believe it or not, but facts are facts, you're gonna *have* to believe them eventually if you wanna survive."

"To *survive* ?" George gulped, "Aren't you being a little dramatic here?"

"Wish I was, George, but that's the honest truth."

"Well, it's a *depressing* truth."

Dream chuckled, "Yeah, I guess it is, depends on how you look at it though! I mean, hey, at least you're alive, right? Most demigods don't even make it this far!"

George almosted choked and Dream cringed as he realized what he had said.

He sucked in a breath through his teeth and clenched his fist, "Will I at *least* get to see my parents any time soon?"

Dream looked away, really not wanting to deal with the outburst that would surely errupt from his answer, "Youre gonna have to stay here all summer so...No."

" *WHAT!?* "

Dream winced "I *said*- "

"No, I heard you!" George interrupted, "I meant, why am I going to be here all summer? My parents are worried sick about me! Shouldn't I at least tell them I'm alive or something!"

"Listen to me George-

"Like, what the fuck?! Ever since I came to America my life has gone to shit!" He ran his hands across his hair, eyes beginning to sting,

Dream rolled his eyes as the outburst he had predicted began in earnest, "George-

"No one's even told me *why* I'm here! Why are you guys keeping secrets from me!?"

Off in the distance, Dream noticed the lake's tides began to grow. A couple of canoes capsized as campers rushed out of the water and his eyes widened

"George, list-!"

"What about my BROTHER?! He's fucking DEAD all thanks to me! BECAUSE OF SOME STUPID FUCKING MONSTER I DONT EVEN KNOW THE NAME OF-!"

"JUST FUCKING LISTEN FOR A SECOND!" Dream screamed, as his hand flashed before George's eye.

A sharp pain spread across his face as he collapsed to the ground. Clutching his cheek, he could feel the blood rushing to his face, and the tears, that he so desperately struggled to hold back, decided that now would be the most appropriate — and embarrassing — time to flow freely.

“Wh-”

“LISTEN, okay?!” Dream shouted as he stood up, the height difference between both demigods becoming more apparent as he towered over George.

“Ever since you’ve gotten into this camp you’ve done NOTHING but WHINE and CRY about how *bad* you have it — well — NEWSFLASH buddy: we’ve ALL had it bad before coming here! Tough *shit* ! I feel sorry for you man, I *really* do, but you think crying about it is gonna solve ANYTHING? Is this what your family would’ve wanted? *Huh* ? For you to sit here wallowing in your own self pity?”

“I-”

“NO! This isn’t the TIME, nor the PLACE, for you to feel bad about yourself. You’re in a shitty situation — OKAY, we get it, so what are you gonna do about it? The gods put you in the BEST fucking position considering everything you’ve just went through. You’re protected, you’ve got a roof over your head, you’ve got food and water, you’ve got places to train yourself so nothing like this can ever happen to you again, WHAT exactly are you feeling sorry about!?”

George stared blankly at the man before him.

“W-why did you hit me-?”

“OH, for FUCKS sake,” Dream raised his hands and slapped his forehead, “is that all you got

from my speech?! Are you not only dim, but deaf too?! Do I need to spell it out for you?!" He leaned forward just enough so that he was at eye level with George and grabbed the front of his shirt. This time, the blood rushing to George's face had nothing to do with being slapped, the sting from Dream's words being a suitable enough substitute.

"GET. OVER. YOUR. SELF. Life sucks, and then you die. All you have to do now is make sure that the 'die' part doesn't happen to you too soon." He leaned back and offered George his hand, "now get up. I have to show you the rest of your 'awful situation'."

If looks could kill, then Dream would most likely still be alive, George's glare wasn't exactly intimidating, with his tear streaked face, snotty nose, and red tinged cheeks, he looked more like a kid fresh out of a tantrum. Still, Dream would probably be, like, mildly injured? Definitely some bruising and minor soreness for a week while he healed from the glare.

He slapped Dream's hand out of the way, "You're a fucking prick you know that?!" he spat, getting up and dusting himself off, "You want me to get over it? FINE! I can do that by myself! I don't need you *or* your mythology lessons, I'll just get Bad and Sapnap to help me with that, they're not a bunch of dicks like *you* !"

He turned around and trudged angrily down a beaten path.

"Do you even know where you're going?"

"Yes!" he lied

"That's funny, because your cabin is actually in the complete opposite direction" He placed his hands on his hips, rocking back and forth, "you know", he smirked, "the place that's *right over these hills* ?

George had stopped walking but refused to turn around.

"And by the way," Dream taunted, "the path *you're* going down leads into the woods, where all the spooky monsters from *my* mythology lessons are. *So*, unless you were planning on walking into the forest unarmed, untrained, and looking extremely vulnerable, I think you're going in the wrong direction."

George couldn't see Dream's face but he could definitely hear the smirk in the bastard's voice.

He held his head up and turned around, avoiding any eye contact with Dream, "I know that's the wrong way," he uttered as he walked past him, "I wasn't walking there, I was just... pacing! Yeah that's it, I know what I'm doing."

"So I'm guessing you'd like to lead the way?"

"You're not invited so I'm not leading anything. Just myself. In the right direction."

"Oh no worries then, I also just so happened to be heading in the right direction."

George quietly grumbled to himself, occasionally hearing Dream chuckle as he said something along the lines of "the human embodiment of a shit-eating grin" or "head in the stratosphere, forehead's a billboard for birds", but after a while he began to relax and let Dream's words from before process.

As much as he hated to admit it, the other man was kind of right. Which sucked. He would have

*loved* to tell him that he was wrong and an asshole for it, but it turns out he was *just* the asshole bit.

This camp was much safer for him than home was, and even if he *were* to be with his parents he'd only be a burden to them. If what Dream said was true, then this camp would finally let him be useful, or at the very least not dead weight. He'd train, he'd fight, he'd work hard, and he'd protect them. He wouldn't let what happened to Mike happen to them too.

Of course, there's no way in hell he was letting Dream know that he was right, or, God (gods?) forbid, taking his advice. He'd just keep it a secret til he died like every other normal person. He definitely wasn't bitter.

He looked over at the blonde man who offered him a brilliant smile. With a glare, he turned his head away and folded his arms across his chest. Obviously a clear sign that he was willing to forgive him but didn't want to talk about it, which Dream understood and accepted immediately.

As they walked wordlessly through camp, they passed by a couple of sand pits where several campers and half-goat/half-men — He didn't even bother asking this time — creatures were immersed in a competitive game of volleyball. That was until they caught sight of George and began whispering about him.

"Is that the son of—"

"I think it is—"

"You know, I thought he'd be taller—"

"Well FUCK that last guy" George muttered as Dream let out a soft chuckle.

Despite the curious looks and whispers, no one actually approached them so they kept walking. The path before them meandered slightly towards the left as they passed by the sparring arena, where to campers were locked in combat.

Dream smirked beside him, "Hey look! It's him!"

George had no idea who he was talking about, but after taking one look at both campers, he took a wild guess and assumed Dream was referring to the taller guy with the light bluish hair, considering how he managed to look completely and utterly bored as he pinned his opponent down. A whistle blew and the opponent dusted herself off before offering her hand for a shake. The tall guy smirked at her and feigned a yawn, causing the opponent to roll her eyes and punch him in the shoulder good naturedly before walking off into the crowd.

"That's Technoblade," Dream explained, "Son of Ares, you could say we're *rivals* of sorts, but I'm totally better."

As a new opponent bounced excitedly into the arena and the crowd readied itself for the final match of the day, George was finally able to get a better look at this Technoblade guy. His hair was actually a more white than blue, probably pink or something, though George couldn't really tell. From where he was standing, the guy appeared to have dark onyx eyes that drowned out his pupils, making him even more intimidating than his probably 2 meter stature already did. *Is everyone in this camp a fucking giant?*

The whistle blew again and he began trading blows with some poor sap that couldn't have been older than *twelve* or something, though he seemed to be holding his ground pretty well against

what was clearly Technoblade's easy mode.

"Who's the baby?"

"That's Tommyinnit," Dream snorted, not bothering to take his eyes off Techno, "he's annoying, but you get used to it, part of his uh..let's call it *charm* ."

Looking at the younger demigod, George couldn't see why he'd be annoying. Poofy blond hair, and wide eyes marked him as the sorta kid that would stick to the rules. He even had his shirt tucked into his pants for crying out loud, save for a duck tail at the rear.

"He's a son of Hermes."

"Ah, that explains it." He nodded, though he had no idea what that meant, making Dream snicker.

"Anyways," he continued, "the sparring arena isn't *too* important, this is pretty much all there is to see. Let's just head back so I can *finally* show you your cabin, it's getting close to dinner and I don't want to wait in line."

George stomach grumbled in agreement and he nodded. As they walked away from the arena, he couldn't help feeling Techno's gaze following them.

"Hey! What the *fuck* are you staring at, Technoblade!? I'M RIGHT FUCKING HERE! YOU'RE FIGHTING *ME* !" Tommy yelled as he swung wildly at the son of Ares.

Technoblade shifted his stance until he'd centered his balance on his left foot, preparing for a right feint. He might not let Tommy win often, but he does take it easy on the little squirt, despite the fact that the small victories went directly to the kid's already overinflated ego.

"Relax, I just got distracted by Dreams eye-bleedin green self," he replied, "He's got the new guy taggin along with him, I'm surprised he agreed to tour him around."

Tommy's eyes widened, suddenly interested, "Oh *did* he now?! Wasn't he being a little *bitch* about it?! He was all like 'Oh look at me! I'm *Dream*! I am a *bitch*! I don't *wanna* show the new guy around because if I do I will leave camp and I will *cry* and *shit* myself!'"

Techno snorted, "Yeah I'm pretty sure that's *exactly* what he said, word for word actually."

Techno brought his sword down as Tommy dodged once again, eliciting grunts of frustration from the older demigod, "You know what Technoblade? I have a proposal for you, do you wanna hear it?"

"Not particularly."

"Okay so *I* think that this new guy's gonna be a bigger threat to Dream's team from the inside than you'll *ever* be as his rival from the outside in tomorrow's game. Dream's *totally* gonna get forced to let him join, and I just don't think you have what it takes to be better than he is worse!" Tommy challenged, unable to resist the chance to taunt Techno.

"Alright, I'm listening."

"Toilet duty for a *whole week* , alright? The **WHOLE WEEK**! If you win, I do it, if I win, you do it, what do you think of that?"

Techno laughed dryly, "no way am I letting the new guy beat me, hope you've got your own



plunger kid, I'm hiding the communal one on the top shelf just for you!"

"Oh wow that is- that's *real* funny, you're just making it harder for *you* when *YOU* end up being the one that does the plunging, Techno... bitch!"

"That was very clever Tommy. I sure hope you didn't fry your brain coming up with it," Techno swung his sword towards Tommy's exposed midriff as he used the distraction to perform a disarming technique, "Aaaand would you look at that? Not evennnn close."

As the battle between Techno and Tommy came to a close and they parted ways, Dream and George had circled back around towards the cabins, passing by the slowly filling outdoor pavilion that served as the mess hall.

"What do you guys do if it rains?"

"We move inside, duh," Dream rolled his eyes, "forget the rain though, what you should really be looking at is that," he pointed, turning George's attention towards the small collection of cabins atop a grassy hill.

There were twelve of them, nestled in the woods by the lake, arranged in a horseshoe formation, with two at the base and five in a row on either side and they were without doubt the most bizarre collection of buildings he'd ever seen.

Each cabin had a bronze number above its entrance, odd numbers on the left, evens on the right with no two cabins looking alike. Number nine had smokestacks jutting through its roof like a miniature factory. Number four had vines hanging onto the walls and a roof made out of green tinted glass. Seven seemed to be made purely out of solid gold, which gleamed so bright it was almost impossible to look at. They all faced a common area about the size of a soccer field, dotted with Greek statues, fountains, flower beds, and a couple of hammocks.

In the center of the field was a huge stone-lined fire pit. Despite it being a warm afternoon, the hearth smoldered, being tended to by a little girl.

Gazing back towards the cabins at the base of the horseshoe, bronze numbers one and two shone brightly. Cabin one was the biggest and bulkiest of the twelve. Its polished bronze doors shimmered like a hologram, so that from different angles lightning bolts seemed to streak across them. Cabin two was more graceful somehow, with slimmer columns garlanded with pomegranates and flowers. The walls were carved with images of peacocks.

"Welp," Dream cut in, "this is where the tour stops. Welcome to cabin 11."

Dream gestured towards the cabin furthest from them. It had the most weathered appearance out of all the others, the paint covering its walls was chipped and practically begging for a new coat. It didn't gleam with any sort of 'mystical air' like the other cabins did, in fact it seemed to have the opposite. Like a dim of unimpressiveness, if that was even a thing. Even in a regular, non-magical, non-mythical camp, that cabin would look bad. It's like there was a race for all the cool things a cabin could have and this cabin tripped and fell on its face five times before it even left the starting line, which was unfortunate considering that Hermes was supposed to be the fastest god out of the whole lineup.

"Uh, just a quick question," George pointed to the Hermes cabin, "why am I sleeping in... that? I'm the son of Poseidon, aren't I? Shouldn't I be sleeping in cabin 3?" He aimed his finger towards the front of the horseshoe where the sea god's cabin lay.

Cabin three wasn't high and mighty like cabin one, but compared to the Hermes shack it was a gods-damned *palace*. The outer walls were of a rough gray stone studded with pieces of seashell and coral, as if the slabs had been hewn straight from the bottom of the ocean floor. Its door was covered in fishing nets alongside most of the exterior. The scent of sea salt permeated the air around it, and George swore that he heard waves crashing and seagulls squawking from inside.

"Well," Dream hesitated, "even though you are the son of Poseidon," he wrinkled his nose in distaste as he said the gods name, "You're still *technically* unclaimed, remember when I told you about those *signs* our parents have to send?"

"Ugh," George muttered, "Guess I'll have to find a spot to sleep on the floor tonight then."

Slapping George on the back and then catching him when the force sent him careening forward, Dream let out a laugh, "now you're getting it Georgie, c'mon," He motioned back towards the pavilion, "dinner's starting soon, and if Sapnap's not a dolphin anymore then he and Bad are probably on their way there right now."

As they walked towards the mess hall, George couldn't help but notice cabin number five. Its walls a messy, muddy, brown, making it look like the color was beaten into the wood with nothing but fists, anger, and raw testosterone.

Technoblade emerged from the cabin, seeming to have finished the spar from earlier, and immediately locked eyes with Dream.

Without missing a beat Dream waved and blew him a kiss, which Techno mimed swatting away in disgust. He put one hand on his forehead and the other on his heart in a wounded gesture which Techno graciously responded to by flipping him the bird.

"Am I interrupting something? I can go ahead if you want me to..." George trailed off, tilting his head towards the dining pavilion.

"Nah, don't worry about it," Dream chuckled, "it's all part of routine, you know, piss him off a little, it's fun."

"I'd like to think our definitions of fun are completely different," George drawled out, "although, I'm glad to know that pissing off the big strong dude who can snap me like a twig is the kind of entertainment we have to settle for around here. Makes me feel a whole lot better."

George remembered hearing somewhere once, probably off a Snapple cap, that humans were the best vocal mimics out of any other species, he supposed he believed it in the moment, but never really internalized it until he heard Dream that day. He would never doubt the Snapple caps again, the man right before his eyes was playing teakettle.mp3 directly out of his mouth like it was nothing. The joke wasn't even that funny, it wasn't even a joke, just a passing comment, but nonetheless, Dream was doubled over like George had decided to disappoint his parents in pursuit of a career in comedy.

He looked around helplessly for somebody to save him, preferably somebody with an asthma pump, and felt relief flood over him as he saw Bad and Sapnap walking towards them.

"Hey there they are!" yelled Bad, running towards them as he waved, Sapnap dragging behind him.

"I think I broke him," he said guiltily once they got closer, "also glad you're not a dolphin anymore Sapnap."

Sapnap nodded in acknowledgement as the three stared at Dream, who still sounded like he should be taken off the stovetop. Bad patted his back sympathetically.

"Thanks, and don't worry about it, he does that sometimes," Sapnap reassured him, "he'll get over it soon, you must've made a *preeeetty* average comment to get him going like that."

Dreams vocal chords attempted to wheeze louder, failed, and resulted in him going into a coughing fit.

"Yup, there's stage two," Sapnap nodded, "it's almost over, push honey the baby's almost out!"

Three more coughs followed by a sigh and Dream was back to his normal height.

"Feeling better?" Bad asked, like the doting mother he was.

"Yeah," Dream cleared his throat, "that was good, I'm hungry though, let's get going."

"That's what we've been trying to do, but you were holding us off Mr. I'm a little teapot short and stout," exclaimed Sapnap as they made way towards the pavilion tables.

"Not nice, you know he can't control those," Bad scolded, "even if you're right."

"Woooooow," Dream drawled out in mock hurt, "thanks."

"No no no!" Bad waved his hands, assuring him, "I didn't mean it like that! He's just right but he shouldn't say it, it's mean!"

"Aww, thanks Bad!" he replied sarcastically, though it seemed to have flown right over the other demigod's head.

"No prob-!"

"I think that as a punishment for making us wait," George piped up, "Dream should get us our food."

"Wha-!"

"Yes George, I agree!" Sapnap exclaimed as he threw an arm around his shoulder, "see he's already one of us, you sure *you're* not the son of Athena?"

Dream turned to Bad, the last bastion of hope, in order to get out of his mess, "Bad please," he begged with pleading eyes, "tell me you won't let them do this to me."

"Hmm," Bad hummed as he brought a finger to his chin, "I don't know, I mean we're already sitting and you're the only one standing" he replied with a smile as all three plopped down in their seats, "I think it's only fair."

"Ugh," Dream grunted, "you guys are the worst friends ever," he huffed as he tried to suppress a smile, "I better hear a nice big 'thank you Dream' when I get back." he trudged off to the back of the line, four plates stacked high, as he awaited his turn.

"George you're a genius!" Sapnap cheered at Dream's receding figure.

"Forget that! How was the tour?" Bad chirped in, "did Dream show you the lake? Or what about the forge? Sapnap likes to hang around there a lot!"

Bad sure talked a mile a minute, but George somehow found the incessant chatter comforting.

"Don't mind him," Sapnap whispered as Bad, oblivious to everyone around him, continued his solo game of 20 questions, "it's just been a while since he's seen a new face."

As George was about to respond, a crowd suddenly formed and began surging towards the front of the camp. He stood up trying to get a view, but fell short.

"What's going on?"

"Oh! Illumina must've come back! That was even faster than last time!" Bad exclaimed like a kid on Christmas morning.

"He's the head of the Hermes cabin," Sapnap added, "and basically the older brother of, like, half the kids in this camp. You should *probably* go talk to him, but good luck trying to get a word in, even Dream struggles to get a conversation out of him most days."

Suddenly, the crowd split like the red sea and right in its center stood the teenage Moses. With the crowd gone, George was finally able to get a better look at Illumina. He wore a black hoodie, much like Bad's, but without the stripe. His eyes, much like his hair, were a dark brown, but speckled with flakes of gold, and shone with a kind of determination he'd never seen before. It took George a moment to realize that the reason the crowd parted so conveniently in front of him was because Illumina was making a beeline directly towards their table. More specifically, directly towards him.

"Oh shit, nevermind I guess." Sapnap quipped, "very easy to get a word in, Dream does it *all* the time."

"Language!"

"Sorry."

What could Illumina possibly want from him?

## Adding Food to the Fire || George

### Chapter Notes

Once again I'd like to thank my editor's, 41rfs25 and Gra55!

Chapter was recently revised and re-uploaded on Aug 21, 2020. This was done to ensure a more cohesive story and less "out of character" (ooc) interactions, as well as removing certain characters that we no longer wish to be associated with. Please enjoy!

As Illumina headed towards his table, George began to sweat like a sinner at Sunday mass.

*Did I do something wrong? No, I just got here.*

*Was I supposed to greet him when he returned to camp? No, Bad and Sapnap are still sitting down.*

*Did my deadbeat dad leave me with any mythical beef against this guy!? Oh god I hope not, what the fuck am I supposed to do if he did? Fight for the honor of a father I don't care about? I-*

"Regular or undetermined?" Illumina asked, interrupting his thoughts.

"Uh, yes?" he replied dumbly.

The three other demigods stared at him awkwardly.

"He's undetermined," Bad clarified.

Illumina made his way around George and sat on the massive stone table. His legs resting on the wooden bench beneath him, earning a mild glare from Bad.

No longer fearing for his life, but definitely fearing for the germs Illumina was leaving behind on their table, George managed to get a better look at him. The first thing he noticed was a black half-mask that covered the entirety of his nose and mouth. Woven within the cloth were filaments of gold that shone just like his eyes. Standing so close to him, he could tell that he was at least Dream's height, if not a bit taller. An aura of power emanating from him.

"Hey," Illumina said, "you must be George, I've heard many things about you recently." He offered his hand. "I never thought a child of the Big Three would be so short."

Hearing himself being called short for the second time, George's eye began twitching. He opened his mouth to tell him off, but noticed that the corners of Illumina's eyes turned up ever so slightly. *The bastard was trying to get a rise out of him!*

"I've been fine," he replied coolly, shaking his hand, not taking the bait, "although, I never realized the head of the Hermes cabin could be so... mysterious."

*Really? He thought, that's the best you could come up with?*

Illumina blinked at his lame retort before bursting into laughter. Bad and Sapnap, ever the helpful duo, joined in.

"Do you maybe want to try that again?" he asked, still chuckling.

"Not really," George muttered sheepishly.

Illumina let out one more chuckle before composing himself and bringing his mask down towards his neck, a light scar revealing itself on his upper lip.

"Banter isn't exactly your forte, is it?" Illumina quipped, "Regardless, welcome to cabin 11. I couldn't help but notice you sitting at the Apollo table with these two," he gestured towards Bad and Sapnap, "that's fine, I personally don't care at all, but the harpies are sticklers for the rules, especially at dinner time."

Turning around George could see a couple of winged beasts giving him side glances when they thought he wasn't looking.

"Just meet me at the Hermes table if you wanna, you know, not get pecked on your first day, it's the one with the giant caduceus inscribed on it, can't miss it."

And with that, he took his leave, waving goodbye without sparing a second glance. As he left, George noticed a shining sun etched upon the table he was sitting at. Looking around, he could see dozens of other inscriptions on the stone tables, a sword, an owl, a grapevine, and a trident at the table furthest from him.

*That's where I belong,* George thought.

Looking down at the table the tree of them were sitting at, and then up to Sapnap George wondered, "Why are you sitting with Bad if this is the Apollo table?"

Sapnap drummed his fingers along the table's edge, "I get bored at the Hephaestus table, and Bad's good company. Besides, he'd get lonely without me."

Going into an intense drum solo, he turned his attention towards the dining hall. "Dream sometimes sits with us cuz his siblings are a bunch of smartasses, other times he joins the 'cool' Apollo kids at the other end of the table." He pointed in the direction of a bunch of people crowding around some guy with a guitar strumming tunes.

"What do the harpies do if they catch us sitting at other tables?"

Sapnap nudged Bad, hoping to finish the rest of his solo in peace, but failing to grab his attention once he realized the son of Apollo was making googly eyes at a certain son of Hermes.

"Just go sit with him already, you guys are gross," muttered Sapnap, though Bad either didn't hear him nor did he care.

He sighed, "They don't really do anything to be honest, they'll just complain to Chiron and depending on whether or not Mr. D is sitting next to him, he'll either let you off with a warning or make you clean the stables with the satyrs." He leaned forward to inspect his nails, " *unless* you make sure they look the other way or do it enough times for them to give up trying."

Deciding that he didn't want to clean any magical horse shit on his first day, and that declining an invite to sit with Illumina was probably a bad idea, he excused himself and made his way to the Hermes table. As he arrived, he spotted Tommy from the sparring arena, as well as the guy that

Bad seemed to be so infatuated with, sitting next to each other, the former jumping around excitedly in an attempt to get closer to the returned hero, who was sitting at the head of the table, recounting his last quest to the other members of the Hermes cabin.

"And then, the cyclops came charging toward us, teeth bared and- Oh George!," Illumina shouted once he'd caught sight of him, "come sit over here!" He motioned towards a spot on the bench next to him, earning George death glares from other campers as the newbie got to sit next to Illumina.

Sitting down, he could feel a calloused hand wrap around his shoulder. "Good to see you buddy! Wouldn't want to witness you become a late night snack for the harpies."

George laughed nervously at Illumina's joke, *at least he hoped he was joking*, and sat down. He felt himself squirming on the wooden bench as he felt dozens of eyes sizing him up.

"So," Illumina began, "where's your dinner? Touring around camp must've surely made you hungry?"

"Actually Dream was just going to-" George's stomach interrupted him with a growl, earning snickers around the Hermes table and a grin from Illumina.

"Don't worry, you can have some of mine," he placed a plate of mutton and mashed potatoes in front of him, the gravy still warm and running down the side. "I've already sacrificed enough in the pavilion fire for the both of us, so dig in!"

As George considered taking a bite of the mutton, he turned towards Illumina.

"Pavilion fire?"

Illumina looked at him as if he were a small child.

"Yeah, the pavilion fire." he gestured towards a giant bonfire at the center of the mess hall, "It's where you burn the best cut of meat or the juiciest piece of fruit in honor of the gods that protect us and keep us safe."

George looked at Illumina as if he'd grown a second head.

"So you just burn perfectly good food?"

Illumina laughed and slapped his back, with a little too much force, might he add.

"Oh come on, that *can't* be the wildest thing you've heard since you've come here." he wiped a tear from his eye, "It's because it's a way to honor the gods and everything they've *done for us*," his smile became strained and his eyes twitched slightly, "look, technically you're unclaimed, so if you don't want to do it, you don't have to, but most of us at least offer a bit of our food to Hermes since he took us in *despite* how many of us there are."

Feeling death glares being sent his way for the second time in two minutes sure made George feel like an asshole for not throwing his food in a pit of flames. He was about to apologize when thunder came down, coincidentally, for the second time that day.

"Oh yeah," Illumina added, seeming to remember something crucial, "don't forget to burn some for Zeus. Since he doesn't have any children, many just honor him instead to keep him content." He took his arm off George and clasped his hands together, "especially now since his master bolt's been stolen."

A silence befell the Hermes table as the death glares focused on George became downturned eyes with worry etched at their corners.

"Master bolt?" He asked cautiously.

Illumina exhaled softly, "You're new here so I'll fill you in," he grabbed his fork and dug in on the mound of mashed potatoes George seemingly abandoned. "Someone's stolen Zeus' master bolt, you know," he paused between bites, "the one weapon deadly enough to make atom bombs look like firecrackers?"

George writhed before Illumina's gaze, but nodded along, pretending he knew everything about it beforehand.

"He's been thundering ever since it's been stolen and he won't stop. It's gotten *especially* worse since he found out about the existence of his brother's son, i.e. you. He thinks that you stole it so you could help your old man dethrone him."

"But I nev-"

"I know," he smirked.

"How come?"

"Because none of us have really gotten to meet our godly parents, especially not before going on an absurd amount of quests in their honor," he hissed bitterly, "so the chances that you teamed up with your dad and planned to steal the bolt together seem pretty slim."

George sat dumbfounded for a while. If everyone at camp knew of his innocence, why did monsters, and the gods themselves, keep trying to find him guilty?

"Isn't anyone going to do something?"

"Chiron's already on it," Illumina answered, not bothering to look up from his mutton, "he's going to announce-"

"CAMPERS," a booming voice echoed throughout the pavilion.

"Huh, speak of the fates."

George looked for the source of the voice, spotting Chiron's half-horse body climbing up the stairs to a makeshift stage. Everyone inside the pavilion stopped eating and looked to him with undivided attention.

"IT HAS BEEN KNOWN TO MANY THAT ZEUS' MASTER BOLT HAS BEEN STOLEN."

The clouds above cracked with thunder so fierce, it seemed as if the sky itself was breaking apart and Zeus would come down and smite Chiron for even mentioning his sudden misfortune.

"MANY HAVE BEEN BLAMED FOR THE LOSS OF THE MASTER BOLT-"

"Just one of us actually!" Some voice near the Ares table piped up before quickly being shushed.

George felt the hairs on his neck stand as half the camp's eyes wandered in his direction, and even though Illumina was still focused on his cut of mutton, he could feel the gold specs from his eyes follow his every move.



"BUT TONIGHT, I SHALL APPOINT A DEMIGOD TO FIND AND RETURN THE MASTER BOLT TO ZEUS HIMSELF."

As Chiron paused, everyone sat with bated breath. Even the Ares table he passed by earlier to get to Illumina was ushered into silence, all their eyes were glued onto Techno, as either he or Dream would be most likely to get chosen for the quest. The Athena table mirrored the Ares table down to a T, the only notable difference being Dream's absence as he was instead sitting with Bad and Sapnap at the Apollo table alongside four dinner plates, one remaining untouched at an empty seat.

*I almost forgot about that.* George thought to himself, feeling slightly guilty for abandoning them.

As Chiron looked to his side and shared a silent nod of approval with Mr. D, Dream and Techno gripped their respective tables with an unwavering intensity, George wouldn't have been surprised if he saw marks etched on the gray stone after this announcement.

"DREAM."

The Athena table absolutely lost their shit. Cries of laughter and celebration could be heard as they hugged one another while they taunted and mocked the Ares kids.

"Techno never dies, but he sure does lose!"

"Look at their faces, they really thought they were going to get chosen for something this important!"

"I'd hate to be them right now!"

The Ares table got up and shot back, not wanting to lie down like beaten dogs.

"Fuck off!"

"Chiron chose y'all outta pity!"

"I wouldn't want-"

"ENOUGH," Chiron's voice boomed, "BOTH TABLES SHALL CEASE THIS INCESSANT QUARREL AND BEHAVE."

Once again, silence befell the entire camp, but that didn't stop both tables from shooting each other dirty looks.

"DREAM," he continued, "ONCE DINNER HAS ENDED, MEET ME IN THE BIG HOUSE WITH YOUR TWO COMPANIONS, WE SHALL FURTHER DISCUSS YOUR QUEST THERE."

And with that, Chiron left the stage and dinner resumed as usual, save for the few Athena kids that made their way to the Apollo table and congratulated Dream on being chosen.

"Well isn't that something," Illumina announced beside him, "in all my years at Camp Half-Blood, I've never seen Chiron designate a quest with so much vigor."

George sat, wringing his hands together, *This is my chance*, he thought, *I can clear my name and maybe leave this place if I return the stupid bolt with Dream*.

He stood up and his seat was instantly taken by some excited Hermes kid who was then immediately shoved off and replaced by a loud, over-eager blonde kid. Illumina gave him a

knowing smile and waved him off as he made his way towards Dream. Although, it was easier said than done, as Techno and some of the Ares kids were surrounding him.

"I'm sure this has something to do with that new kid he's been dragging around-"

"Stop that," Techno commanded, silencing the rogue camper, "Dream earned this quest fair and square, there's no need to sully his victory with false accusations."

He then proceeded to offer his hand to a sitting Dream, black eyes meeting yellow, and a silent agreement behind both.

Dream stood and accepted Techno's outstretched hand, although that didn't stop either male from using a death grip as they shook, knuckles from each hand turning white from the immense pressure. Supporters of each eyed the exchange suspiciously, as the men finished, letting go, and went their separate ways. The crowd of Ares kids thinned, giving George a chance to reach Dream.

"What was that all about?" George blurted once he sat down.

Dream glared at George and shoved him his dinner plate, "nice of you to come back to us Mr. Popular, was it fun hanging out with Illumina?" The food had long since gone cold, and apparently so had the mood.

George shrugged off the icy reply and dug into his meal, or rather tried to. The fat from the mutton coagulated on his plate, and the gravy from the potatoes formed a thick paste over the peas it spilled over. Still, Dream had made an effort to get it for him, so he'd make an effort to scarf it down.

"So," he tried picking up the conversation again, "did you decide who you're-"

"Hey, why don't you ask Illumina how his last quest went?" Dream crossed his arms, "or how about Techno and all the quests he's been on? Maybe you wanna summon fucking Hercules next, you wanna have dinner with Hercules? I'm sure he'd be thrilled to talk to *you*."

George stared at him incredulously, *where is all of this coming from?*

"Drea-"

"Bad, Sapnap, I'll meet you at the Big House in five. I need to grab a few things from my cabin."

With that, Dream stormed off, leaving his half-finished dinner alongside a wide-eyed Bad and a, for once, speechless Sapnap.

"Well," Bad sputtered, "that sure was something."

Sapnap blinked a few times before he leaned forward and slammed his hands on the table, "I would've given my left FOOT to see that happen again! Did you see how red his face was when he left? CLASSIC!"

Bad glared at Sapnap for his impromptu outburst. Pulling him down, he began to whisper something in his ear, just quiet enough for George to not be able to discern anything.

"What the hell was-"

"Nothing!" Bad blurted out as he brought his hands together and laid them flat against the table. "Dream's just been-"

“He’s just jealous you managed to get Illumina’s attention so easily despite being new here,” Sapnap cut in, excitedly exposing his friend, “he’s kinda got a ‘celebrity crush’ on the guy, so seeing you so close to him kinda ticked him off.”

“Sapnap!” Bad cried, “You weren’t supposed to tell him that!”, he turned to George with a silent plea in his eyes, “please just... take it easy on him.”

As Bad and Sapnap looked at him, George couldn’t help but agree despite not knowing exactly what he’d done.

"Sure," he replied half-heartedly, though he wasn't quite sure what he was agreeing to, "I'll try my best."

Seemingly satisfied with his response, Bad and Sapnap both returned to what they were discussing before Chiron had announced who would take on the quest to return the master bolt. Meanwhile, George tried to fill his stomach with as much as he could muster, getting past the sliminess of the meat and the chill of the potatoes. Five minutes came and five minutes passed as all three demigods took their plates back to the pavilion and made their way towards the Big House, George having insisted on tagging along, while the other two demigods didn’t have the heart to turn him down.

Once inside they came face to face with Chiron, Dream, and Mr. D, memories of his first encounter with the man flooded George’s mind.

"Well if it isn't Beach Boy, Josuke, and Star PI-"

"What are you doing here?!" Dream demanded, leaving Mr. D with downturned brows and a wrinkled nose. The older man’s gaze flitted between George and Dream as he sensed the vibe of the room suddenly dropping. He conjured up a diet coke and shuffled away, muttering something about teenage drama under his breath.

Everyone remained in place after the door closed behind them. Chiron stood still, hoping that whatever happened, happened quickly. The tension between Dream and George being thick enough to cut with a blunt pair of safety scissors.

"Look," George broke the silence, "I'm sorry that Illumina paid attention to me and not you, but I need to join you on your quest."

George felt Sapnap and Bad cringe beside him at his terrible apology.

Dream's stance hardened, his shoulders tensed, and his jaw clenched as he held his balled fists close to his side, “look George, you're new and inexperienced, not to mention the fact that you’re also-"

“You don’t understand, I *need* this quest! I have no other way of proving myself or clearing my name, you *have* to take me with you!”

Dream laughed dryly, “I don’t *have* to do anything! Who the hell do you think you are? You’re a nobody, George. The day I let you join one of my quests, the *fucking gods* will have to intervene.”

As soon as those words left his mouth, a bright blue light filled the room. All four demigods shrunk back as the initial light blinded them, but eventually receded to a soft glow. At first, George couldn't tell where the light came from, but once he saw everyone else in the room staring at him, he realized it was being emitted from above his head.

"Are you fucking KIDDING ME?!" yelled Dream.

"Oh my gods..." Bad whispered, seeming to have not heard Dream's swear past the shock, "that's Poseidon's trident! He really is his son!"

George looked above him, only to see a fleeting glimpse of what must've been an elaborate trident bathed in blue waves. As he stood in awe at the fading image, Chiron walked over to him and placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Welcome, George, Son of Poseidon the Earthshaker, Stormbringer, and God of the Seas."

"Sooo what was it you were saying before?" Sapnap asked, his face splitting into a shit-eating grin as he placed a hand on George's shoulder, "something about the gods intervening?"

Dream looked around the room, as if searching for some sort of hidden camera. His eyes landed on an extremely smug looking glass of water and he cursed under his breath.

"It seems that the gods have spoken," Chiron declared, "we cannot refuse the request of the god of the seas, George must accompany you on your journey."

Dream tsked, "but we can't *all* go on this quest, did we just conveniently forget about the curse of four-?"

"I can sit this one out," Bad chimed in, "quests aren't really my thing anyways."

"Wh- Bad, no!" Dream spluttered, "You've been waiting for a quest since forever!"

"There is no use arguing over this," Chiron interrupted, "we cannot deny the will of the gods. If BadBoyHalo has chosen to sacrifice his place on this quest to grant their wishes, then the gods will gift him a new one."

Dream, seemingly unsatisfied with that answer opened his mouth to argue, but Bad placed a comforting hand on his shoulder.

"It's fine, seriously, I'd much rather stay at camp than risk my life out there," he reassured him, "you guys go get that bolt back and come back in one piece, alright you muffins?"

All three demigods nodded at Bad's bright smile.

"Good, you're gonna do great out there!" with that, he turned and left the building, leaving the rest of the group to stand in silence.

"Let us not dally about, the oracle awaits us," Chiron said, leading them out through a doorway, and somehow climbing up two flights of stairs before presenting a set of decaying, old stairs that have probably existed since the creation of time. *If I survive walking up these, I can survive just about anything this quest throws at me* George thought solemnly to himself.

# Mum tells me to go to Hell || George

## Chapter Notes

Special Wednesday update!

Shoutout to 41rfs25 and Gra55 for making this chapter possible.

Chapter was recently revised and re-uploaded on Aug 21, 2020 with minor changes.  
Please enjoy!

All three demigods followed Chiron as they made their way up to the attic, climbing up the old set of rickety stairs in a single file line. If the horse guy, glowing tridents, brother-killing monsters, and angry clouds hadn't been enough to convince George that magic was out there, the fact that these stairs didn't collapse from underneath him definitely sealed the deal. Each step sent another prayer out of his lips as the stairs shuddered and groaned under his weight.

"If George is finished reciting Bible verses," Chiron sighed, George blushed and stammered an apology, "then we can proceed towards the Oracle and request a prophecy."

"Amen," Sappnap preached, bringing his hands together.

"You boys know this is serious business." Chiron's eyes bored into all three demigods, "especially now that we're dealing with the Oracle of Delphi and not some punished god you can curse out." It seemed as if he directed that last comment specifically towards George.

He turned around and grabbed the brass doorknob of an old oak door. The rusty hinges screeching a warning before them, '*Leeeave*', they said, '*geeeev it up*', they added. Nonetheless, all four entered the dark musty attic. Dream and Sappnap were nonplused, confident even, as they entered without hesitation. George on the other hand, followed behind with a slight tremble in his steps.

"Uh guys," George paused, looking to the group for answers, "what exactly *is* an Oracle anyway?"

Dream stopped, his body turning and his brows furrowing. "An *Or-a-cle*," he enunciated as if George were six, "is a person who divulges Apollo's prophecies."

George nods, "so like a news reporter!" he confidently blurted out as Sappnap snickered.

Dream rolled his eyes, hitting Sappnap square in the shoulder. "No, not like that, it's more of like a..." he waves his hands around, snapping his fingers when he finally gets it, "Like a person who tells you something but only in rhymes. Like some sort of... cryptic Dr. Seuss."

"Dream please do not compare Apollo's sacred oracle to a children's book author."

"*Yeah* Dream, that's *so* rude." Sappnap mocked as he smacked Dream upside the head, "have some respect for the gods."

"I'll show you respect for the gods," Dream challenges, turning around to strangle him.

Just before the argument could turn into a full blown fight, Chiron's voice boomed over the trio, "BOYS, we've arrived at the Oracle."

Walking over to both men, George couldn't help noticing Dream giving Sarnap the worst stink eye he'd ever seen while Sarnap simply stood there, grinning like an idiot. He didn't even question it, but he did regret standing next to Dream when the Oracle made its presence known.

The 'Oracle' was this weird mummy thing. Its body decomposing, the flesh sliding off, the skin a wretched muddy yellow color, and its black hair covering most of its face. As George stepped back, the mummy's eyes glowed, springing back to life.

He let out a blood curdling scream, leaping away from the ungodly demonic creature and right into Dream, wrapping his arms around him like the poor guy was a lifeline.

"George what the fuck! Get off of me you idiot!" He yelled, trying to push the still screaming boy off of him, "Your arms are like NOODLES how the fuck are you so strong?! STOP SCREAMING"

"IT'S ALIVE!" he shrieked.

"And I'm about to NOT BE because you're cutting off my GODSDAMNED circulation!"

Sarnap snickered as Chiron brought a hand to his forehead and released a deep sigh.

"What the FUCK are you laughing at Sarnap, get this thing off of me!"

"Nah man this is all you," Sarnap joked, holding his hands up in surrender, "I actually really like my eardrums when they're not bleeding-"

*"Three shall journey to the land of the rotten,*

*And through one's folly, his knowledge forgotten."*

The three demigods quickly fell silent as smoke began to emerge from the Oracle's mouth, eyes glowing brighter than before, and a deep voice recited the remainder of the prophecy.

*The forsaken leagues will bring delay,*

*Branches entwined they'll set ablaze.*

*The lovers' hearts chaos commands,*

*To deny or accept true love's demands."*

As the prophecy was uttered in completion, the yellow glowing eyes became dull, resting back into their sockets as the decayed body of the Oracle fell limp, resting on its chair for the next group of quest-goers to bother it once more.

All three demigods stood still, the silence hanging heavy in the air around them.

George stood frozen in his place, mouth agape and eyes wide open. Dream took the opportunity to wiggle free from his human cage, leaving George's arms up in the air in a Dream-shaped cavity.

Sarnap brought George's arms down and closed his jaw for him, "you look like an idiot," he whispered.

Chiron nodded, looking at the trio with long shadows on his face, “you boys know what to do,” Dream and Sarnap looked to the son of Poseidon as he spoke, “you two will protect and train George for this quest, disregarding the fact that you have capture the flag tomorrow, you’ll have one day to train him,” the way Chiron’s eyes darted towards George brought forth some concern. “Be wary when travelling to Hades as you comb through the Underworld-”

“Wait,” George butted in, “Hades? As in-“

“Yes,” Chiron confirmed, “ruler of the dead, god of the underworld”

As George froze, he could feel a set of hands on his shoulders, “Don’t worry Georgie,” Sarnap whispered beside him, “we’ll take it from here.” He was ushered down from the attic and back into the Big House, the air from the musty attic behind them as Dream opened the front door and stars began to dot the black sky.

“Well then boys,” Chiron announced, “the day is just about over. I expect all of you to go directly to your — *respective* — cabins,” he stared pointedly at Dream, who only rolled his eyes and crossed his arms melodramatically, “that also includes you, George. You’ve officially been claimed and as such you do not need to sleep in Cabin eleven.”

“Oh thank gods,” he blurted out, “I mean, not that there’s anything wrong with the Hermes shack-Cabin! Sorry, cabin. There’s nothing wrong with it, but uh...I just like the, uh-”

“Aesthetic?” offered Sarnap.

“Yes!” George exclaimed eagerly, thankful for the excuse, “Ocean stuff! I like a lot. Water. Nice!”

Behind him he could hear a muffled kettle about to burst only for it to settle down to a suppressed snicker.

Looking at the three demigods before him, Chiron raised a finger and opened his mouth, but no words came out. Instead, he turned around and trotted back into the Big House as he left the ‘saviors of Olympus’ to their devices.

“Welp!” Sarnap clasped his hands together, “today sure was eventful! How’re we feeling about questing with this newbie, Dreamy?” he asked, slinging an arm over George’s shoulder.

“Not good, to be honest.” Dream admitted.

“Ouch-”

“Dream!” Sarnap gasped, interrupting George as he covered his ears, “he has feelings too you know! Don’t be so mean!” Taking his hands off George he plastered on a blinding smile that would rival Apollo, “don’t listen to him George, we’re so thrilled to have you!”

“You’ve been hanging out with Bad too much,” Dream uttered, rolling his eyes, “all I meant is that he’s untrained, unskilled, newly claimed and kinda scrawny. The only thing he’s proven to be good at is passing out, crying, and shrieking.”

“That last one could be pretty useful actually, he almost shattered the attic windows with those pipes,” Sarnap pointed out.

“The *point is* ,” he continued, “there’s no way he’s ready for this kind of quest, it’d be suicide to go in the way he is. Honestly, I don’t even think a year’s worth of training on this guy could bring him *close* to the qualifications of entering the underworld but we have exactly — what? — ONE day to

figure it out for him? This is bullshit! Bad should've come with us instead of him!"

"You do realize that I'm still here, right?" George hissed.

"Yeah and I don't really care!" Dream challenged, "you deserve to know exactly what you're getting into! I don't particularly like you, but I sure as hell don't want to see you die. It'd be safer for all of us if you could sit this one out and let Bad take your place, but that's obviously not gonna happen so we're just gonna have to hope that tomorrow's game will be good enough to fit a year's worth of training into a single night." Dream turned around and trudged off towards the Athena cabin. "I've had enough of this conversation, I'll see you guys tomorrow."

"Make sure you're going to *yours* this time," Sapnap shouted with a shit-eating grin, "no late night visits to *anyone* in the Apollo cabin!"

"Fuck off Sap!"

Sapnap chuckled and took his arm off of George's shoulder, "c'mon, I'll escort you to your cabin m'sir, just in case you forgot where it was."

"Thanks, but what was that all about?" George asked, curiosity taking over the common courtesy of minding his own business.

"Dream likes to be at the Apollo cabin when he's not supposed to," Sapnap explained, the shit-eating grin yet to leave his face, "even though he knows that Bad would much prefer he stick to the rules and that Wilbur could serenade him at literally any other time."

"Serenade?!" George asked bewildered, "you mean people actually *like* this guy? For what?! His personality? It's ass. He's only, like, a *little* bit funny. And his laugh, okay, maybe it *is* kind of endearing, and he does make some pretty good points when he talks. His advice isn't *that* bad, I guess, but he could be nicer about it, and *sure* maybe he's really nice to his friends and-"

"George, I'm gonna have to stop you right there," Sapnap cut in, "you're embarrassing yourself."

George fell silent, wracking his brain to find something else to talk about instead of accidentally praising Dream again when he spotted Bad outside one of the cabins talking to another camper.

The guy was waving his arms around animatedly as he retold the events of some sort of crazy adventure that may or may not have been completely made up. Bad smiled and nodded along either not noticing or not caring, seemingly content with just listening to the tall tale. The boy's camp t-shirt was obscured by a bright blue hoodie with a cartoonish face across the front, his fluffy brown hair bouncing around with every excited movement.

"Hey, who's Bad talking to? He was at the Hermes table during dinner, wasn't he?"

"You got it!" Sapnap confirmed, "That's Skeppy, never trust him with anything by the way, he'll take *any* opportunity you give him to troll you. The two of them are pretty close, they're really fun to hang out with but they can get pretty insufferable sometimes."

"Insufferable how?"

"Don't even ask, spare yourself, let's just keep moving before they spot us or, gods forbid, try to talk to us." Sapnap glanced in their direction and saw that the pair had paused their discussion, opting to stare directly at them instead, "ah shit, too late, just go go go!" he ushered him off to his cabin, leaving the duo in the dust.



As George was rushed to his cabin, he felt a pair of glaring eyes following his .

“ *That's* the kid that took your spot in the quest?” Skeppy spat, thrusting his thumb at George’s receding form.

“Skeppy, just drop it please.”

“Bad this was your chance to prove yourself!” he groaned, burying his face in his hands, “You can’t keep letting people push you around like this, dude.”

Bad narrowed his eyes at him, “Hey, aren’t *you* the one who keeps threatening to *kill my pets* every time-,”

“Okay that’s DIFFERENT!” Skeppy exclaimed, cutting him off, “I’m your *best friend* , you know I love you, *this guy* just randomly showed up and took *your* spot on YOUR quest! It’s BULLSHIT!”

“LANGUAGE!”

“I’m SORRY! But you know I’m right, *right* ?!”

“Skeppy, I promise you, it’s not that big of a deal, just go to sleep and if you still want to talk about it that badly tomorrow then we will, okay?”

“Ugh, *fine* !” Skeppy grumbled, “we’ll talk about it tomorrow, have a good night, Bad.” He shoved his hands in his pockets and walked off in the direction of the Hermes cabin.

“Goodnight!”

As Bad waved Skeppy off, George entered cabin three and leaned on the cabin door as he shut it behind him.

Even though he’d already seen it before, cabin three still left him in awe with its sheer size and beauty. But despite its grandness it still felt as though something were missing. Thoughts of his mother, father and Mike invaded his mind.

Oh.

The place reeked of loneliness.

He looked out a window and up at the sky, its black expanse lacking a moon, but instead scattered with hundreds of stars. He wondered how his family was doing. Is his mother worried about him? Has his step dad called the police yet? Did they know what happened to Mike? Were they safe?

Were they even alive?

He hoped that whatever kind of afterlife the Greeks had to offer, it would treat his brother well.

Catching the salty scent of the cabin’s interior, it reminded him of the wind ashore West London, oftentimes where his family would go on holiday. The interior walls glowed like bioluminescent algae, a soft light bouncing off his face while he studied the seashells that adorned the saltwater fountain nestled in the corner. To the side, there were six empty bunk beds with blue silk sheets neatly folded, and covered with a fine layer of dust, no sign anyone had ever slept there, much less entered the place. The driftwood drawers that lined each bed remained empty and barren, as he didn’t bring any belongings he went straight to bed. He took off his shoes, socks, and shirt, all

three reeking of sweat and filth as he threw them on the floor, not caring where they landed, or even taking a shower for that matter, considering the day's events.

He crawled underneath the covers and felt his eyelids grow heavy, just as he fell into a restless slumber.

## Put a sock Innit || George

### Chapter Notes

I'd like to thank my editors, 41rfs25 and Gra55, for making this chapter possible, and stick till the end, there's a surprise.

Chapter was recently revised and re-uploaded on Aug 21, 2020 with minor changes. Please enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Morning arrived and along with it came a persistent banging at George's door. He groaned and flipped over in his bed, slamming the pillow on top of his head to muffle the sound. He laid in blissful silence and felt himself drifting off into another dream before he was rudely pulled out of it by the sound of someone bursting through his door with a loud crash.

“What the FUCK?” He jerked upwards, nearly getting whiplash from the sudden movement.

“WAKE UP SLEEPY HEAD!”

He rubbed his eyes, seeing Sapnap standing, in all his glory, at the entrance of his cabin with the remains of his door beside him.

“Saaapnaap,” he groaned, slamming his head back down to the pillow as he pulled the covers over his head, “why are you heeeere?”

“Weeeeell,” he parroted, “to be honest we kind of forgot you existed for a little bit— it’s nothing personal I swear — ! It’s just that new kids are always taken care of by Illumina since they usually have to stay at his cabin, we forgot that you were our responsibility until he approached us today and asked about you.”

“Why was he asking about me?” George asked between yawns, still not getting out from under the covers.

“Beats me, maybe cuz you’re a child of the ‘Big Three’ or something,” Sapnap leaned on the busted door frame as he inspected his nails, “whatever it is, Dream got jealous that you nabbed Illumina’s attention so easily again so he’s sulking at his table and refusing to get you. Bad would’ve volunteered if he wasn’t *also* sulking at his own table.”

“What’s *he* mad about?”

“Skeppy went to hang out at the Aphrodite table for breakfast and Bad got jealous, even though he *shouldn’t* be because technically F1nn is-,” he stopped himself, realizing it was only morning and breakfast closed in 20 minutes, he straightened his posture and looked back at George “okay forget it, I can’t give you all the tea on camp drama without a chart or a whiteboard or something, that’ll take longer than your training. I’m just here to come get you before breakfast's over.”

Not wanting to get up, but also not wanting to miss breakfast more, George threw the covers off,

forgetting he slept shirtless last night, or the fact that he skipped out on showering in favor of passing out on his bed.

“Wow! Slow your roll there buddy!” Sapnap joked, waving his hands to obscure his view. “at least take me out to dinner first!”

George rolled his eyes, “quit being dramatic, it’s just a shirt-”

“You don’t understand! My poor virgin eyes!” he wailed in mock agony, “I can’t stay here any longer, I’m going outside!”

“You’re gonna be waiting there for a while because I have no idea where to find anything clean to wear-.”

“Oh that’s easy,” Sapnap cut in, dropping the act, “there’s a chest that has all your everyday needs right there,” he pointed next to George’s bed, “it’s got shoes, pants, camp t-shirts, soaps, shav — eh you don’t need that —, a hairbrush, toothpaste, whatever, you get the gist. You got pretty lucky that your deadbeat dad is one of the Big Three, they’re some of the only cabins that have bathrooms attached to them, the rest of us have to do it in a *separate building* like a bunch of godsdamned peasants.”

“You can use my bathroom if you really want to,” George offered.

Sapnap’s eyes lit up, he grabbed the other demigod by the shoulders and looked him dead in the eyes, “George, you are a gift from Olympus. Dreams a prick, he’s wrong, you’re the best thing to ever happen to this camp. I love you.”

“Please leave my room.”

And just like that, Sapnap was gone, allowing George to take the opportunity to finally wash off the sweat and grime from the day before. Once he had freshened up and picked out an outfit from the wide array of identical jeans and piss-colored t-shirts, he met with Sapnap outside.

“Lookin fresh Georgie” Sapnap whistled, “lets go get you some breakfast.”

As George and Sapnap left his cabin and entered the pavilion, George couldn’t help but feel about a thousand eyes staring into him. He tugged at his shirt in discomfort.

“What do people keep staring at me for?”

Sapnap looked around, seeming to not have realized all the attention they were garnering until George mentioned it. He cupped his hands together and brought it to his mouth, making a makeshift megaphone. “ALRIGHT GUYS ZOOS CLOSED, MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!” he cried out, causing half the camp to turn their heads back to their plates, “sorry about that dude, you’re just kinda famous, you know, Big Three and all.” He turned to George, “They’re probably trying to guess if they can take you out in a fight. That or they’re jealous of your personal bathroom.”

“I really hope it’s the bathroom thing,” George murmured, feeling a cold sweat creep down his neck.

Sapnap laughed and clapped his back, “Don’t worry about it man, I won’t let them beat you up, and neither will Bad.”

“What about Dream?”

Sapnap looked away but his smile never left, “I won’t let them beat you up, and neither will Bad.” he repeated.

“Great,” George muttered, tossing his hands in the air.

“I’m kidding! I’m kidding!” Sapnap reassured him, “He doesn’t hate you that much, *probably*, he’ll defend you too, *I think*.”

“You’re making it wor-”

“Oh look! Bad saved us a spot!” he cut in, waving to the other demigod, “aaand it looks like there’s no Skeppy in sight, we’re safe for now.”

“What’s the problem with him anyway?” George asked as they approached the Apollo table, “you never elaborated on him yesterday.”

“Well basically,” Sapnap explained, “those two are the happiest people on Earth when they’re together but the only other person who can stand to enjoy their company are the rest of the ‘idots’ and *maybe* Hellen Keller.”

“I think you’re over exaggerating-”

“Eh, maybe a *little* bit,” he lowered his voice as they got closer to Bad, “honestly, they’re not *that* bad, they’re pretty funny if you don’t mind feeling like a third wheel. Personally, I’m not a fan, but everyone’s got their own opinion. Be supportive though he’s still sulking.”

When they reached the stone table Sapnap shot Bad a wide smile, “Heeeeeyyy buddy, how are you doing today?”

George looked at the untouched breakfast in front of Bad, and despite knowing from Illumina that he should sacrifice some food to the gods, *huh*, his old man wishes, he couldn’t help but just skip the whole ordeal, if maybe, just for this morning.

“You gonna eat that?”

Sapnap elbowed him in the ribs.

“No,” Bad sighed, “I don’t think so.”

“Great,” George announced to his stomach’s satisfaction, “cuz I’m starving.”

Sapnap glared and elbowed him in the ribs again, jerking his head in Bad’s direction, “Oh, uh sorry,” George lamely coughed up, “how are you doing? You look a little down.”

Bad lifted his head off the table and looked at George with bleary eyes, “All my friends ditched me to hang out with *somebody else*, and I got left here all alone! Dream’s on the other end of the table with Wilbur while Skeppy is over there with F1nn5ters entire fanci- ARE THEY EATING OFF OF EACH OTHER?!” he stood up and yelled, half the Apollo table turning their heads in annoyance, “WHO ALLOWED THIS?!”

“Bad I hardly think — OH — that is unfortunate,” Sapnap remarked, “let’s uh, look in the opposite direction right now.” he brought up his hand to cover his eyes as he turned to George. “Avert your gaze son of Poseidon, there are sights that even gods should not bear witness to.”

George was thankful to have his back facing in that direction.

Turning back around and completely ignoring his own advice, Sapnap wailed, “THINK OF THE CHILDREN! CAN’T YOU GET A ROOM YOU, *uh*, one, two, three, four... TEN!”

The Aphrodite table chuckled, but conceded, throwing the ab-bacon in the trash, while some made loud, obnoxious kissing sounds just to spite him.

Sapnap laughed it off, “I wouldn’t worry about it too much, you know that it’s all jokes with them, right? F1nn’s even flirted once with you before, did you take *that* seriously?”

“Well, no....”

“See?”

“But this is different!” Bad argued, “ever since that one quest to that volcano they’ve been calling each other *babe* all the time, it’s really weird!”

George cringed and chewed quietly as his eyes flitted between the two, soaking in all the camp drama.

“Okay,” Sapnap conceded, “that part *is* a little weird but the *entire* camp knows that F1nn is basically married to the SIMP council, there’s no WAY they’d let it fly quietly if he *actually* got into a relationship with someone, there’d be an UPROAR!”

“Well *maybe*, but-.”

“And then there’s also Vurb who might *actually* cry if he finds out that F1nn is taken.”

“Oh, that’s a good point! F1nn wouldn’t want him to cry, that would be mean!”

“Exactly!” Sapnap nodded, “besides, F1nn and everyone else likes making jokes about you and Skeppy too much to break you guys up, you do that just fine on your own every other weekend.”

“Yeah you’re right- HEY WHAT’S *THAT* SUPPOSED TO MEAN!” Bad screeched, slamming his fist on the table as Sapnap chuckled.

George swallowed the last bite of his food, “So you said Dream was on the other side of the table?” he cut in, before Bad started throttling Sapnap.

“Wooooow,” Sapnap mocked, “is that *all* you got from this conversation?”.

“No! It’s all very interesting I swear!” He stammered, “volcanoes simps or whatever, it’s just that the two of you are supposed to be training me today and I should probably go and apologize to Dream for... being jealous of me? I’m not really sure, I just don’t want him to be mad and ‘accidentally’ turn me into a George-Kebab, that’s all.”

“Yeah in general people prefer to not be skewered, I can see where you’re coming from.” Sapnap nodded, “luckily for you, his neon abomination of a hoodie can’t be missed, even if you were blind.”

George grimaced, “Well *actually*, you see-”

“Oh my gods, *are* you BLIND?!”

“NO! Just colorblind. Everything red and green and in between is the same shade of piss yellow or shi-poop brown to me.”

“That’s uh... that’s really unfortunate, and also kinda hilarious,” Sapnap pointed to a couple of campers near the Ares table, specifically their shirts, “So does that mean the entire camp looks like they’re wearing piss-yellow t-shirts to you?!”

“Unfortunately.”

“HA!” He bellowed, “that’s the best thing I’ve heard all day! I’m kind of jealous though if we’re being honest, at least your eyes don’t have to bleed from this bright orange everywhere,” he grabbed the hem of his shirt and wrinkled his nose as he looked down, “we might as well direct traffic for a hobby.”

“At least they let us wear hoodies over them,” Bad piped in.

“A small mercy,” Sapnap acknowledged, “anyways,” he turned to George, “Dream’s over there. He’s the one leaning on the guy with the guitar and the two brats sitting next to him.”

“Sapnap!” Bad scolded, “they’re just kids,”

“Objection!” He slammed both hands down on the table in a poor imitation of Phoenix Wright. “Tommy knows more swear words than I know words! Half the things he says could be curses and you. wouldn’t. even. know.”

Bad turned to look at Tommy before settling his eyes on Tubbo, “it’s not nice to Tubbo....”

“Okay *that’s* true,” Sapnap conceded, trying to take a slice of bacon off George’s, *formerly Bad’s*, breakfast plate.

George smacked Sapnap’s hand away, “who’s Tubbo?”

“The polite looking one that isn’t a little shiii — shrimp. He’s my half-brother and honestly a good kid, how he ended up becoming so close with somebody like *Tommy* is beyond me.” He tried taking another slice of bacon off George’s plate, and was met with a pleasant surprise when the son of Poseidon just pushed the entire breakfast in his direction.

George wiped his hands and stood up, aiming his sights on a certain alleged neon abomination before making a move, “Alright, I’m gonna go talk to Dream, wish me luck-”

“Okay brats, settle down and listen up!” Mr. D’s voice rang out from a makeshift stage.

“Orrrr maybe I won’t,” George sat back down.

“Today is Friday, which means that it’s time for Capture the Flag. Woo. Hooray. Cabin five are the current holders of the laurel.”

The Ares table exploded in cheers. A bunch of kids began to stand on the tables, swarming around their reigning champion while chanting:

“TECHNOBLADE!”

“TECHNOBLADE!”

One of the campers took off his shirt and swung it off in the direction of an unsuspecting nymph. Meanwhile, two others caught on and took off their shirts, trying to see if they could hit Mr. D as he glared at them in annoyance.

“TECHNOBLADE!”

“TECHNOBLADE!”

“TECHNOBLADE!”

“Oh would you all just SHUT UP! You’re all so annoying and I’m not even allowed to cuss you out, just let me finish!” The god’s face came close to matching the exact shade and hue of his purple eyes, “The two teams will be led by the *Ares* cabin,” he challenged through gritted teeth, daring them to cheer again, “and the Athena cabin,”

He darted his gaze towards the Athena table, only to find it’s champion missing.

“Nope,” Dream shouted, popping the ‘p’ , “over here!” He waved from the Apollo table as Wilbur snickered beside him.

“ *Moving on* ,” He growled, “Noah will be announcing the alliances and rules in a few minutes, so be ready to listen. Finish up your breakfast, because we’re not waiting for any of you,” and with that he stepped down from the stage and walked back to the Big House, the entire pavilion erupting into excited chatter once he was out of sight.

“Okay,” George spoke up, “I know what capture the flag is, but based on what I’ve seen so far from this camp, I’m gonna take a wild guess and assume that it’s not gonna be a normal game.”

“Ding ding ding! You catch on quick!” Sappnap praised, pulling out a pair of thumbs-up, “I’ll give you a quick rundown, alright?” He cleared the space around him, using napkins and whatever utensils he could find to create what seemed like a miniature battlefield, “So basically we’ve got our two teams: red for Ares, blue for Athena, each team has got its own flag and in order to win you gotta bring the other teams flag to your side without getting your own flag stolen, all the same for your regular capture the flag up till here, right?”

George nodded, paying close attention for when the demigod aspect kicked in.

“Alrighty!” Sappnap cheered, “this is where the fun begins! We’re all armed to the teeth with deadly weapons and given free reign to do whatever we want with them!”

George looked at Sappnap, down at the table, and then back up to Sappnap before silently rising from his seat.

“This entire camp has a fucked up sense of fun huh?” He spoke dryly, “I’m going home. Where’s the exit?” He mimed walking away as Bad stood up.

“Language!” he warned, “And you can’t leave, you *have* to play this game! It’ll help you train for whatever you encounter on your quest!”

“Bad I’m going to vomit your breakfast onto you,” beside him Sappnap broke into a flurry of laughs, almost rivaling Dream’s kettle.

“Please stop laughing, I’m going to die and it’s not even gonna be to a monster, your polite brother is gonna run me through with a spear and I’ll die in the woods alone.”

Sappnap’s laugh intensified, almost doubling over as if in pain “calm down George, you’re not gonna die,” he tried to straighten up, swiping away a stray tear as he did so, “we’re not allowed to maim or kill, otherwise we’ll lose dessert privileges.”



“THAT’S THE INCENTIVE THEY CAME UP WITH TO NOT MURDER SOMEONE?!”

“I mean, yeah,” Sapnap scratched his head, unable to comprehend George’s confusion, “the dessert here is insanely good.”

“It really is,” Bad nodded in agreement beside him.

“The only people who might want to skip out on it are the Aphrodite kids though,” Sapnap reasoned, “they’re usually on diets, but those guys couldn’t kill you anyway, they’d chip a nail and then what?”

“That’s not true!” Bad cut in defensively, “A lot of the Aphrodite kids are really good at combat! And what about those Ares kids that are really into protein stuff-?!”

Sapnap clamped his hands over Bad’s mouth, “Haha!” He lamely defended, “that’s *funny* ! Don’t listen to him George, he doesn’t know what he’s talking about, all the Ares kids love carbs I promise-!”

“Everyone clear off your tables and meet outside the armory! The rules will be announced and the game will begin shortly!” a voice called from outside the pavilion.

All three demigods gathered their plates, or rather, Bad took the one plate they shared for breakfast back to the pavilion nymphs while George and Sapnap cleaned the table of any stray food particles.

When the table was finally spotless and all plates were cleared away, a conch horn blared in the distance as they left the mess hall and walked towards the armory.

Looking around, George could see every camper sporting giddy smiles and trembling fists. Even the Ares cabin, as stoic and menacing that they wished to be, couldn’t hide the small smiles dotting their faces in excitement as they geared themselves for the game.

George couldn’t help but feel a heavy stone settle at the bottom of his stomach. The rock grew heavier as they passed by groups of campers talking about the game.

They walked over to an open field, spotting Dream, with Wilbur at his side, and Illumina behind him. They were holding a flag, about ten feet long, glistening gray, with a barn owl above an olive tree. Looking back at Dream, he noticed the same white mask he had when he first met him wrapped around his neck.

Looking over to the opposing side, he saw Technoblade and F1nn alongside three other campers holding up a flag behind them as well. His attention was immediately caught by Technoblade’s golden crown, encrusted with what seemed to be sapphires, rubies, and emeralds, most likely fake, but George couldn’t tell for sure. That was besides the point, however, as the flag on the Ares’s side, which they were proudly holding above their head was...

“Whatcha starin’ at?” Sapnap asked, interrupting his thoughts.

“The Ares flag,” he pointed out, “it’s uh...”

Sapnap’s eyes flitted from George to the flag and back again before it finally clicked.

“THEY LOOK LIKE SHIT!” He shouted, bending over from sheer force of laughter, “HA! HEY ARES YOU GUYS-”

“Sapnap isn’t that your cabin leader standing behind Techno?” some girl from the Demeter cabin

asked behind them.

His mouth clamped shut.

“That was almost extremely embarrassing for all of us,” she remarked.

“Thank you, Sylvee-”

“Wait does that mean you’re gonna be on Ares’ team?!” George shuddered, his hands trembling, “I thought we were all gonna be together!”

Sapnap rubbed the back of his neck, “*Yeah*, sorry about that, I kind of forgot to tell you we’d be splitting up.”

“So whose team am *I* going to be on?!”

Sapnap paused, “Actually, I have no idea”

“Well *that’s* reassuring-!”

“Listen up campers!”

George looked over at the announcer, the man effortlessly commanding the attention of the entire camp in ways that Mr. D only wished he could. Despite the fact that the guy was making announcements for a summer camp game for a group of teenagers, he had evidently decided the event was important enough to be dressed in a crisp black suit. Although, his messy blonde hair and blinding white smile contrasted starkly with the business formal he was sporting.

“It’s time to announce the teams! Athena has made an alliance with Apollo and Hermes!” He paused to allow the crowd to cheer, “While Ares has allied itself with Dionysus, Demeter, Aphrodite, and Hephaestus!”

More cheers erupted, but as soon as they died down, a small blond child piped up, “What about the new guy?!” At the sound of his voice, George recognized him as Tommy.

“Yeah, who’s side is he gonna be on?” added a second, politer voice beside him.

“Well whichever side it is, it better not be ours!” called a third voice from the Ares team.

“No, I think he *should* go with Ares!”

“We don’t want him, give him to Athena!”

“NICE ONE, ASSHOLES,” Sapnap yelled from amongst the crowd, “HOW BAD ARE YOU THAT YOU CAN’T TAKE A NEWBIE ONTO YOUR TEAM WITHOUT LOSING?”

“YEAH, YOU BASTARDS!” added Sylvee from beside him.

“LANGUAGE!” Bad screeched at the two, “and isn’t Dream supposed to be the one training him?! Stop avoiding it and just let him join Athena!”

“Wh-!” Dream cried at the sudden turn of events, “Sapnap’s in charge of him too-!”

“Alright then! It looks like Poseidon is allied with Athena for today!” Noah announced, thankful for the lifeline Bad had thrown to him and drowning out Dream’s complaints. He paused to allow a

collective groan to rise from the Athena kids, “moving on to the rules.”

He gestured towards running water, "the creek is the boundary line, as per usual, and the entire forest is fair game. All magic items are allowed, but only one per person. You may share with your teammates if you have more than one. Contraptions built by the Hephaestus cabin must have been reviewed and approved prior to the game, if you have any late submissions then too bad. There's always next game. The banner must be prominently displayed, and have no more than two guards at a time. Prisoners may be disarmed, but may not be bound or gagged. Finally, killing and/or maiming is strictly prohibited and will result in *harsh consequences*, even if it's accidental, so *please* watch where you're swinging your swords," he eyed Tommy, "I will be serving as both referee and battlefield medic along with Mr. Chiron. Arm yourselves with whatever the table has to offer!"

He spread his hands, and the tables before him were suddenly covered with equipment: helmets, bronze swords, bows and arrows, spears, oxhide shields coated in metal.

“Hey what about explosives?” a boy from the Hermes cabin piped in.

“Yeah where are they?”

Noah sighed deeply, “Explosives are *off the table*. Literally. We were all, err, *most* of us were here last game when one of you somehow *accidentally* snuck off the field, placed the explosives on cabin ten, and blew it up.”

“It’s okay you can say Skeppy!” called out F1nn5ter from the stage, the deceptively deep voice causing George to do a double take.

“It was an accident I swear!” Skeppy yelled back, causing half his cabin to snicker and thump him on the back, “It WAS!”

“We believe you,” replied Noah with an eye roll, “the conch horn will sound in ten minutes so make sure to get all geared up by then!” With that, he stepped off the podium and the crowd surged forward to grab their equipment.

“Whelp, I’m off to my side,” Sapnap spoke up, turning to an ever-anxious son of Poseidon.

“Please make my death swift and painless Sapnap,” George pleaded.

“Pshh, you’ll be fine,” he assured him, “I’ll see you on the battlefield, c’mon Sylvee!”

“Mhm, good luck!” she said with a smile as the two walked off, leaving George behind to fend for himself.

“You alright there you muffinhead?” Bad asked gently, George nodded silently, “C’mon, I’ll help you get all geared up.”

He shuffled towards the table, which was already practically empty.

“It’s NOT FAIR!” a high-pitched voice from the other end whined.

“Tommy, you’re being a brat,” another voice scolded, somehow the tone and intonation of the second voice tugged at George’s heartstrings. Memories of Mike fighting towards the forefront of his mind.

“It’s just not the *same* when we’re not all on the same team! You know I’m right!”

“Sometimes these things just can’t be helped,”

“Oh that’s rich, that’s *really* funny coming from YOU! Remember how sad you were the first time you had to be separated from Techno and Philza? You wanted to leave camp! Now look at you, you’re all chummy with Dream, the *bitch* .”

“Language!” Bad chided, causing Tommy and the other man to swivel their heads in his direction.

“Oh shut it you!” Tommy yelled “I can say what I want! Peni-!” The older man’s hand clamped over his mouth, and he smiled apologetically. He was tall, even taller than Dream or Techno. It took George a minute before he realized he was looking at Wilbur. His dark brown curly hair jutted out from underneath a black beanie and his umber eyes contrasted deeply against the paleness of his skin. His height gave his lean physique a willowy look compared to George’s smaller frame. This guy didn’t even need any weapons, he could probably disarm an entire fleet with just his smile.

“Sorry about that,” he beamed brightly amidst Tommy’s muffled shouting, “Tommy,” he whispered through gritted teeth, “apologize,”

Tommy stopped flailing and Wilbur removed his hand from his mouth.

“Penis. I’m sorry.”

“AH!” Bad screeched, as Wilbur thwacked Tommy upside the head.

“Tommy you’re being very rude.”

“I apologized! What, do you want me to apologize AGAIN? That’s dumb. You’re a dumb man WilburSoot,” he argued, earning himself another thwack to the head.

“HEY-!”

“If you’re missing any gear in your size,” he turned to George, “I’d be happy to point you in the direction of the armory,” Wilbur spoke calmly despite Tommy’s incessant shouting.

“DON’T IGNORE ME WHEN I’M YELLING! AT YOU!”

“That would be great, thank you!” Bad thanked him through the chaos of it all.

“OH YOU TOO? YOU WANNA PLAY? I’LL SWEAR! I’LL DO IT BITCHBOYHA-!”

His screaming was cut off yet again by Wilbur’s hand.

“I’m glad to be able to help! Especially a new camper, you’ll do great out there, yeah?” he asked George with another blinding smile.

George didn’t have the heart to tell him that he would probably walk into a tree branch and knock himself out the second he stepped into those woods, so he simply nodded and gave him a half-hearted thumbs-up.

“Brilliant!” he laughed, “I’ll just be over there,” he jerked his head in the direction of the Athena alliance while he walked off, dragging a kicking, screaming Tommy behind him.

Once inside the armory, Bad pulled off a rusted piece of armor off the wall, “okay,” he remarked, “this chestplate looks like it should fit you.”

“Y-yeah it looks great,” George stammered, trying to hide his apprehension at wearing the tetanus infested armor.

A soft “bitch!” could be heard in the distance, but the two chose to ignore it in favor of fitting George with as much protection as possible. After fastening a helmet with a blue plume onto George’s head, Bad handed him an awkward, heavy shield.

“Sorry about this,” he empathized, “there really is no better option when it comes to shields though. You’re just gonna have to bunker down and hold your ground with it.”

George lifted the shield, barely able to hoist it a few inches off the ground before it fell flat from his noodle-like grip, “this seems dangerous and not at all helpful.”

“Well,” Bad reasoned, “hopefully Dream has a plan that won’t require too much fighting from you!”

“Isn’t that counterproductive? Aren’t I supposed to be training for battle here.”

Bad considered his words, if only for a moment, “I’m not sure actually, you should probably ask Dream, he’s the team leader after all. I’m gonna get myself battle ready, you can stand over there with the rest of the group!” He pointed in the direction that Wilbur and Tommy had walked off in.

As he left the armory, George noticed Dream standing at the head of the crowd, giving orders to a group of about 40 demigods all dressed in mismatching pieces of iron and chainmail.

“Alright blue team you know the drill! Everyone who hasn’t been filled in on today’s strategy goes to their usual posts, the rest of you know what to do, we’re gonna dominate these guys!” He brandished his sword, a double-edged silver blade engraved with inky-black swirls atop a leather handle, up into the air. “Let’s go blue team!” He cried out before putting on his white mask and leading the charge forward.

Everyone cheered, brandishing their weapons and following Dream down to the southern woods.

As the blue team rushed towards the trees, the red team taunted them as they passed by.

“Hey look, it’s the losers!”

“Hope you guys like the taste of defeat!”

“Yeah blue team can eat shi-”

“Red team!” Technoblade yelled, glaring at the perpetrators amidst the chaos, “forward charge!”. He brandished his own sword. It was more elegant than Dream’s. A single-edged golden blade encrusted with sapphires, rubies, and emeralds, much like his crown. Despite its prim and regal aura, it seemed to inspire a violent fire in those around him, as the full might of the Ares alliance followed Techno into the northern woods.

As the blue team passed by George to reach the southern woods, he saw Dream’s white mask prominently displaying its crudely drawn smiley face.

“Dream!” He called out, pushing past the sea of campers in his way, “Hey! Wait up!”

In his haste, George didn’t realize that his shield was coming uncomfortably close to hitting a certain blonde nuisance square in the back.

“Oi! What’s your problem?!” Tommy shouted, shoving George back, “You just hit me you bitch! You wanna fight? I can take you.”

“Yeah you probably can,” George conceded.

“Well that’s depressing, you’re no fun,” His eyes narrowed, “Hey wait a minute, you’re the new guy! See I could tell because you are also British, we have to stick together with all these Americans around. Plus I saw you earlier with BitchBoyHalo. Your name is George, right? Do you know what you should do right now? Because I think you should definitely go talk to Dream.”

“Uh, yeah, and I’m *trying* to but this crowd isn’t really helping,” he explained, craning his neck around Tommy’s figure so as to not lose sight of Dream.

“Yeah, him and Wilbur have been planning their little strategies *all morning*, I have no clue what they’re still talking about at this point, but it can’t be *too* important,” Tommy complained, oblivious to George’s effort as he adjusted himself in a way that further blocked George’s view of the team leader.

“I mean... it might be but I just need him to tell me what to do.”

“Oh so you’re just gonna follow whatever orders he gives you? Like a little bitch?”

“*No* like somebody who doesn’t want to die,” he huffed as yet another camper walked in front of his field of vision.

“Well George, I think we can really help each other out here, you and I. You see, *I* actually have business to attend to with my good friend Wilbur, you know Wilbur, he was very nice to you before, but whenever he’s with Dream, the bitch, he doesn’t want me hanging around! Could you believe that they actually left me behind?”

“That sounds-”

“Unbelievable! I know!” He cried, “You know what George? I have a proposal for you. Let’s make a deal, yeah? I’ll get you through this crowd, alright? And you can distract Dream for me so I can talk to Wilbur! How does that sound.”

“Terrible-”

“Great! I’m glad you’re on board,” he cupped his hands over his mouth and shouted, “BOYS IT’S AN EMERGENCY WE HAVE TO GET THROUGH QUICK CLEAR OUT OF THE AREA OH MY GODS WE HAVE TO TELL DREAM MOVE MOVE MOVE.”

The crowd parted for them in a flurry of nervous chatter as Dream and Wilbur turned their heads to see what all the yelling was about.

“Dream, old pal! You will not believe it!” Tommy cried out..

“What is it Tommy,” Dream sighed, not expecting Tommy’s routinely bullshit to show up this early in the game.

“George has something to tell you!”

“Okay? Is that all?”

“Yeah, it’s crazy! Wilbur we should go away, because George said we should, so he can speak to

Dream.”

“Tommy this really isn’t a good time,” Wilbur scolded as he pinched the bridge of his nose.

“A-actually I never-”

“No no George, no need to say anything, I know you want us to leave so you can have your very important talk with Dream that Wilbur should be far away from no matter what important matters they had to discuss before.” Tommy grabbed Wilbur by the arm and began tugging him in the direction they came from, “Come now Wilbur, let us leave.”

“Tommy I’m warning you-!” but it was too late, Tommy had dragged Wilbur into the crowd. The man was as good as gone.

Dream sighed deeply, George didn’t need to see under his mask to know that his expression was one of complete irritation.

“George,” he spoke with an air of warning, “what was the very important matter you just *had* to tell me about that involved Wilbur, my co-captain, being far away from me?”

“I just wanted to ask what I’m supposed to be doing,” he replied sheepishly, “Tommy kind of went wild with his whole explanation, sorry about that.”

Dream sighed again, “for future reference: never ask Tommy for help with *anything* . Now I have no clue where Wilbur is and I *need* him in order to execute our plan. The best thing for you to do is probably border control. We’re not really planning on letting anyone on the other team come *close* to our borders so you’ll probably be safe, and on the off chance that someone *does* make it there, you *should* be within shouting distance of other campers as long as they haven’t been taken out first.”

George gulped, “*Okay* and how exactly is that going to make me battle ready?”

“Uhhhh... defense and scouting! Before you can learn how to fight you gotta know how to spot the danger. See, I want you to *avoid* getting into fights as much as possible on our quest so you don’t get hurt and if you know how to spot danger then you’ll know it’s time to run!”

George stood still, looking at Dream as he knew he was being lied to.

“That was a great explanation for something you just pulled out of your ass.”

“Isn’t it?” Dream replied, “now go in that direction, that’s where you’re gonna be patrolling. You’ll know the area when you spot the creek, can’t miss it.”

“Sounds good, and I’m sorry again about this whole thing,”

“Nah don’t worry about it, I kind of expected you to fuck things up for us. Wilbur and I have a meetup point so you didn’t mess our plans up that badly.”

“That’s fair,” George nodded, “I’ll go away now.”

“Please do.”

He glared and punched him in the shoulder before he broke away from the dwindling group, most of them having already gone to their respective posts.

He only made it about fifty paces before a familiar voice called out behind him.

“George! My good friend!” Tommy called, slinging an arm over his shoulder, “How did your conversation with Dream go?”

“It was-”

“Good, that’s good, I’m glad to hear it. You know, *my* conversation with Wilbur didn’t go *nearly* as well. Can you believe that he got MAD at me? He was being a bitch.”

“That-”

“And you wanna know what I told him? I said ‘well it wasn’t my fault because George really wanted to speak to Dream about something important involving only them! And I am a good friend-’ you know I am a good friend to you George, ‘I am such a good friend I got him a whole conversation with Dream.’”

“So now he hates me?”

“So now he hates you! But you know what? *I* can help you make up for it, do you wanna hear my proposal?”

“Your last proposal got me in trouble.”

“Well *maybe*, but did it get you a conversation with Dream like you wanted?”

“I mean I *guess*- ”

“See I’m great- I’m AMAZING at this! C’mon George you don’t even need to accept just listen to it okay?”

“O-”

“Alright so you know the other team, the Ares side? Well it’s led by my very good friend Technoblade, you know Technoblade, right? You saw him and I sparring when you first got here! Only really good friends of Technoblade get to spar with him, trust me, he wouldn’t waste his time on somebody he doesn’t know. Anyways, Technoblade, he trusts me alot, okay? And before the game he told me something he told me ‘Tommy I’m gonna beat up the new guy’ so of course I said ‘Technoblade you should not beat up George he is a good man!’ but even though he is my very good friend, Technoblade did not listen to me and he said ‘I don’t care, I am going to find the new guy and beat him up’.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

“Well George I think that before you get beat up you should be warned, you know? It’s not fair to ambush an untrained man like that. At this point though I don’t really think you can avoid it at all, he’s really set on coming to beat you up.”

“How is this at *all* supposed to help me make it up to Wilbur for hating me?!”

“Oh well you can impress him lots if you manage to defend yourself.”

“There’s no way I can do that.”

“Oh no George you are very wrong, you see I have a plan. A very good plan. If you know that Technoblade is coming for you then you already have an advantage! You wanna know what I think you should do? I think you should go find him first and take him down, he’ll *never* expect



you to try to go for him! If you catch him off guard he'll be so surprised that he'll be an *easy* kill."

"KILL?!"

"*Win*, I meant *win* I would never *ever* want you to kill Technoblade, he is my very good friend."

"Tommy this is the worst idea I've ever heard in my entire life, I don't even know how to properly hold a weapon!"

"Yeah I can see that," he muttered, "but that's all the more reason for you to sneak up on him! How else are you even supposed to stand a chance? He's coming for you regardless so really it's all up to you, I'm just giving you some professional advice."

Realistically, George knew that half the words coming out of Tommy's mouth were bullshit, probably more than half, *but* he couldn't help to think that the kid might have a point. Even if it's the smallest point imaginable, he couldn't deny that on some level it made sense. Even though Dream clearly told him *not* to engage in combat, getting the jump on Techno would show him up. Despite the fact that his hands were trembling and that his breakfast threatened to leap out his throat for the second time that day, George found himself honestly considering Tommy's absurd advice.

"Looks like we're here!" Tommy yelled, pulling him out of his thoughts, "Aww would you look at that?! Very nice, this is a great spot to get beat up in. I'm gonna head off to my post George, just think about what I told you, yeah?"

George nodded halfheartedly as Tommy waved him goodbye and disappeared into the woods.

### **[Chapter End - Audience Takeover Time]**

#### Chapter End Notes

We wanted to leave this chapter off in a place where you can decide what George will do next. Leave a comment on whether you'd rather he stay put at his post or try to ambush Techno, the choice that got mentioned the most will determine which way the story will go. We'll do a few of these throughout the fic and the consequences will range from big to small, so make sure to think ahead before you vote.

Until next time! :D

# A Furry Brings Home the Bacon || George

## Chapter Notes

By an overwhelming majority, Team Stay won!

《TRIGGER WARNING》 This chapter contains mentions of drowning, it's nothing too graphic but it's still there so look out for that if it's something that's difficult for you to read about.

Enjoy the new chapter everyone! Make sure to check out the ending notes for a little surprise!

Also, some of our old chapters have been/will be retroactively re-uploaded/edited to improve the story, so go check 'em out if you've got the time!

Here's the list of the godly parents as promised:

George - Poseidon  
Dream - Athena  
SapNap - Hephaestus  
Illumina - Hermes  
BBH - Apollo  
Skeppy - Hermes  
Wilbur - Apollo  
Tommy - Hermes  
Techno - Ares  
Sylvee - Demeter  
F1nn5ter - Aphrodite

《New additions》

Nestor - Ares  
Calvin - Ares  
Tubbo - Hephaestus  
Fundy - Dionysus

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

With Tommy gone and only the sounds of running water keeping him company, George took a moment to take it all in.

Far away, the sound of a conch horn inspired a series of whoops and hollers. The clanking of metal and the cries of battle followed, not far behind. A blue-plumed ally from the Apollo cabin raced past George, leaping over the creek and into the trees, disappearing beyond enemy lines

He peered into the woods, the image of Tommy long since gone, but his ominous warning still hanging heavily in the air. He looked around his position, noting the dark woods around him and the muddy creek bubbling behind him. The grip on his sword tightened as he wedged the clunky shield into the ground between him and the war cries from the battlefield beyond.

*What the hell do I do now?*

Tommy's words played through his head like a record on repeat, *Is Techno actually on his way to beat me up? There's no way I stand a chance against him. Not in a million years. Tommy probably knows him better than I do... is ambushing him really the only way? It has to be, what other choice do I have?*

Having made up his mind, he gripped his sword tightly and fastened his chestplate. *I have to get the jump on him first, I really, I must, ambush him.*

He took exactly three steps forward before an earlier conversation rose to the forefront of his mind.

*"For future reference: never ask Tommy for help with anything ."*

He paused, recalling exactly how Tommy had blown up his own situation wildly out of proportion.

*He was totally bullshitting.*

Loosening his shoulders and relaxing his stance, he walked back behind the makeshift wall he had made for himself out of his awkward shield and plopped down to the ground.

*On the off chance that Tommy was telling the truth, what would I even do once I got there? Jump on him? I'd get thrown off and then laughed at and then stomped on. If he wants to beat me up, he's gonna have to come over here and do it himself, I'm not just gonna deliver myself to him, he chuckled confidently, though it faltered slightly as he realized he was allowing himself to get beaten up either way.*

He sighed again and looked out into the woods, resigning himself to his fate, be it death at the hands of Technoblade or death at the hands of sheer boredom.

As time marched on and the sounds of battle died down, George decided it was probably gonna be the boredom one. I mean, don't get him wrong, he liked not being skewered like a shish kebab as much as the next guy, but just standing in an open field with nothing going on sure does dull the mood. The only interesting thing that had happened the entire time was that he scared a squirrel by throwing his helmet into the bushes after it practically cooked his brains with how hot it was getting. On the bright side, every second he stood, or rather sat, guarding the area around their territory helped him relax more and more as it proved that Tommy was, in fact, a huge fucking liar like he had predicted.

"Tch," he tsked at no one in particular, "his asshole must be jealous of all the shit that comes out of his mouth."

He threw his head back and laughed loudly, despite how mediocre his joke might've been, and forgot about the game going on around him, or at least he almost did, until he heard a loud rustling in the underbrush near him.

"Did you see the *look* on that man's face?!"

George shot up like a rocket. He grabbed his sword and raised his shield, struggling for a moment as he tried to pull it out of the ground, and braced himself for the newcomer to emerge.

"I didn't get a *chance* !" an eerily familiar voice replied , "It was so quick! He got *destroyed* ! He was just mindin his own business!" muffled laughter came from the bushes, far closer than George

would've liked for it to be, "It was tragic! Calvin, you're insane-!"

"Listen," a third voice interjected, matter-of-factly, "I had to intervene."

"Intervene with what?!" the familiar voice cut in again, "his stroll through the woods? He looked like he was looking for a *picnic spot!* "

As the three voices burst into a fit of laughter, one of them seemingly materialized as he stepped out of the bushes and into the clearing before George. He had dark brown skin and was dressed as casually as a person could get, black hoodie, sweatpants, and a pair of airpods that, despite the high intensity of the game, stayed snug in his ears. He wiped a stray tear from his face and immediately locked eyes with George.

"Oh?" his voice rose in interest, "another one? Hey Nestor, who's this?"

"New guy?" The one Calvin addressed as Nestor piped up, "haven't seen him before, we were probably out for his introduction." He emerged from the bushes as he sized George up.

The contrast between both campers was jarring. While the first looked like he had just rolled out of bed, the second would've looked like he was about to purchase the entire woods and place his multi-million dollar factory right in the center of it if it wasn't for his bright, perpetual smile. He sported a three piece suit with a brightly colored tie, not a speck of dust to be found, and not a hair on his head out of place.

"Are you guys gonna handle him, or should I?" The third, and final, voice emerged from the woods, George realizing immediately why he sounded so familiar, his heart skipping a beat.

"Actually I think *you* might want to take him on, Techno," Calvin snickered as he elbowed Nestor.

*Tommy was telling the fucking truth.*

The crowned menace stepped out of the bushes with slightly less grace than his teammates, stumbling as his leg got caught on a bramble, though it did nothing to take away from his intimidating stature.

"Who-" Techno paused, finally catching sight of the 'new guy', "Oh come *on* guys, *this toddler* ?!"

All three laughed as though George weren't there, however his own deafening heartbeat assured him that he *was* in fact there and that he *was* in fact about to get deleted out of existence. His heart's heavy thumping drowned out the entirety of the trio's conversation.

"Calvin, that was *so mean* ! What kind of monster do you take me for!" he said between breathy chuckles before turning to George, "Listen man, I'm not interested in 'taking you on' at all."

"Yeah, he just wants to kill you."

"CALVIN!" Techno warned.

"Mans is gonna get a heart attack, slow down!"

"*Thank you* , Nestor." Techno remarked, "I might not feel bad for beating up terrible fighters , but *this* guy," he gestured at George's trembling figure, "he's barely out of his diapers! This wouldn't be a *fight* , it wouldn't even be bullying! It would probably be a criminal offense!"

“So we’re letting this guy go?” Nestor asked.

Techno stared at George with a strained, contemplative look, “I’m honestly considering *giving him things* , I mean-”

Calvin broke into a howl which quickly devolved into a coughing fit, Nestor joined in and thumped him on the back sympathetically.

“You really said, ‘need a hand there buddy,’ AHA ohhh gods,” Calvin cried.

“I’m being *serious* ! Look what they gave him! That’s a straight up door with a strap you can loop your arm through! Does he even have a weap- **THAT’S A TOOTHPICK!**” Techno exclaimed incredulously, the dying laughter of his teammates leaping back to life, “**THAT’S AN ACTUAL TOOTHPICK I WAS ON THE QUEST TO GET IT FROM THAT GIANT! THAT WAS HIS LITERAL TOOTHPICK!**”

The three cackled maniacally as George whispered silent prayers to every god he could remember.

*What the hell are they laughing at? They’re gonna kill me, I’m dead, I didn’t even get to say goodbye to mum and dad, why the hell didn’t I listen to Tommy?! I should’ve just hid, I should’ve dug a hole in the ground and buried myself until the game was over. Why would I even think he would lie? He’s my teammate for fucks sake, obviously he’d want to warn me no matter how good of friends he and Techno are. I have to do something. I have to run, I should throw my shield at them and sprint out of the woods and out of this camp. How far would I even be able to throw it?*

“Did any of you pick up something better off the last guy?”

“You mean the last *victim* ?” Calvin clarified with a cheesy grin, earning him a half-serious glare from Techno.

“I’m still not over that, he was *massacred!* ” Nestor cried.

“I just tapped him I swear!”

“The *plays* , it was incredible, an honor to watch . ”

“Guys, anything, please, I think he’s gonna cry,” Techno cut in.

“Oh he could take my sword, I’m not even meeleing, it’s all in the bow shots,” Nestor replied, patting his trusty bow as he pulled an unused sword out of its sheath and threw it to Techno, who caught it in one hand and twirled it around dramatically.

“Oh! Look at him go!” Calvin shouted.

“Techno with the *moves* !” Nestor hollered as he and Calvin hyped up the impromptu performance.

Techno, not one to let down an audience, started throwing the sword in the air and flipping it every which way, causing more cheers to erupt from the team.

*Oh my god what’s he doing now, is he showing off before he kills me?! Is this his killing ritual?! The ‘beat up the new kid’ dance?! Can he just get it over with PLEASE?!*

With one final spin around his back, Techno caught the sword and bowed deeply.

“Please, please, hold your applause, you’re too kind,” he waved off the other two as well as the invisible wood nymphs that had made themselves known from above through their equally

enthusiastic cheers.

As the cheers died down, the crowned son of Ares turned to approach George with his glinting sword. George retreated, matching each step Techno took forward with one going back, failing to recognize any words coming from his mouth on account of his ears being filled with the sound of his beating heart.

With a tremble in his step and a tug to his stomach, he walked backwards, though he only had so much room to spare. The muddy bank, only a few feet away, drew nearer with each step. A few more and he'd walk into the creek, and at this point, the only thing worse than losing to Techno and disappointing Dream would be losing to Techno, disappointing Dream, *and* ending up cold and wet.

He looked behind him, already at the water's edge, and gulped. The tug in his stomach intensified, as if someone had lassoed a rope around his midsection and pulled with all their might. It was a miracle that he hadn't been yanked into the creek yet by this mysterious force.

Techno was now only a few feet in front of him, the sword in his hand as menacing as ever and the look on his face remaining the same. Wait-

Was that *concern* that peeked out from underneath Techno's gaze?

*Psh*, George thought, *crocodile tears from the big man himself*.

Now with his left foot firmly within its watery grave he knew this to be the end. As Techno approached, and with no way out, George closed his eyes and cowered behind his shield, bracing himself for any incoming blow, a feeling of unease rose in his stomach in time with the huge shadow slowly creeping upwards towards him, looming above his head.

The seconds ticked by and the shadow remained unmoving. It was only when the sound of a sword clattering to the ground hit his ears that he dared to peek out from behind the shield.

Technoblade had dropped his weapon to the ground, his expression mirroring that of his teammates with their mouths agape as they stared above George's head. It was only then that he realized that the shadow above him couldn't possibly belong to Techno's slowly retreating figure.

Something cold and wet dropped onto his head and he held his breath.

*Is something drooling on me? Did the gods hear my prayers and send a giant monster to get rid of me quickly and painlessly so I don't have to suffer at the hands of Technoblade?*

Taking a deep breath, he slowly turned his head upwards and froze.

"Holy. Fucking. Shit." Calvin whispered, and George had to agree with him.

Right above his head wasn't a gods-sent monster or a crazed son of Ares and his pals out for his blood. It was a giant wall of water, twigs, leaves, and tiny tadpoles floating inside it, unperturbed by their sudden relocation. The feeling of unease in his stomach twisted again and the water responded in time with it, swirling around in the air above him.

Technoblade seemed to recover slightly from his initial shock, as he bent down to retrieve his fallen weapon.

“DON’T COME ANY CLOSER!” George screeched, head snapping in Techno’s direction. He threw his arm forward and the water followed suit .

“Dude, I’m just trying to-”

“I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU’RE TRYING, TOMMY TOLD ME EVERYTHING!”

“Tommy? What are you talking about?”

“DON’T PLAY DUMB, I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU WERE PLANNING!” George concentrated on the feeling in his stomach, as he felt it slowly dying down, the wall of water starting to deform and lose its shape.

Techno, realizing George’s abilities were waning, tried his hand at coming towards him again and took one more step forward.

He immediately regretted it.

Seeing Technoblade approaching him again, George let out an ear piercing shriek, the wall of water leaping forward in an arc over his head.

“We fucked up,” Calvin declared.

With only a second to spare, Nestor nodded in agreement, “Yup.”

And then they were underwater. The force of the entire creek crashed down on top of the trio, pinning them to the ground as they struggled to fight against it. George’s eyes were screwed shut, his screaming hardly letting up for a second to allow him to breathe.

Realizing that he was the closest to the edge of the onslaught of water, Calvin wrestled against the heavy pressure, flipping his body over and wedging his sword into the ground outside the liquid wall. Using it as an anchor, he pulled his body towards it, the water pressure flattening him to the muddy earth. He grimaced at the effort, his lungs beginning to burn, and with a final pull he popped out of the risen creek with a force strong enough to throw him forward.

In an instant, he was on his feet and pulling Nestor out by the bow, who popped out with an equal amount of force and sent them both careening to the floor again.

“Are you good?” He asked, breathing heavily as the oxygen reentered his system.

Nestor nodded, getting to his feet and leaning over with his hands on his knees, “We gotta stop this man,” he coughed, “he’s frickin insane!”

“Yeah you can say that again.”

Nestor, between pants of air, squinted his eyes at the giant wall, or rather cube, of water that held them hostage only moments before. He blinked at it.

“Cal?”

“Yeah?”

“Is... Techno still in there?”

They paused and looked at each other, then looked at the water cube.

“FUCK, NESTOR, HE’S STILL IN THERE!” Calvin screamed, shaking Nestor by the shoulders, “HE’S GONNA FUCKING DROWN!”

“Where is the water guy?! I still have one arrow on me!” He responded frantically.

“I’ll boost you up the tree, you think that’ll be high enough for you?!”

“It’ll have to be!”

Calvin clasped his hands together, Nestor's muddy dress shoe pressing down on them as he launched him up the nearest tree. Grabbing the lowest hanging branch, he pulled himself up and scrambled onto it, continuing to climb higher and higher until he got a clear view of a cowering, screaming George on the other side of the water cube.

Reaching into his suit jacket, Nestor pulled out the one arrow that survived the attack and notched it into his bow. Focusing his aim on the volatile demigod, Nestor entered a state of total concentration, not even flinching when a branch snapped above his head and hit him on the shoulder. He took in a deep breath, locked on his target.... and fired.

He heard Calvin suck in a breath beneath him as the arrow sailed through the air, barely skimming the surface of the water cube as it drew closer and closer to its target.

“Shot ‘em!” Nestor called with a smile, and the water cube lost its shape.

The forest around them began to flood, a massive wave pushing Calvin into the tree as the water raced across the entire floor, causing the wood nymphs to go into a frenzy and sending a bunch of animals scampering out of their homes in retreat.

Across the forest, the battle on the Ares side came to a sudden halt as everyone turned their heads in the direction of the giant crash. Their eyes widened as the beginnings of a stampede of woodland creatures started running towards them, the rumbling of the fast approaching water followed close behind.

Dream eyes flickered from the incoming tsunami to the base of the Ares flag.

*Perfect*, he thought.

Turning around towards his teammates, he spotted Illumina, eyes wide open and mouth hanging low.

“Illumina go! NOW!”

The son of Hermes snapped out of his stupor and made a mad dash towards the flag. He ducked under the swords of those who were fast enough to react, and ran through the ones he couldn’t dodge, shrugging off each hit as though he hardly felt them. At full speed, he snatched the flag from its mound as another sword came swinging his way. The clashing of metal rang in his ears as Dream moved in to defend him.

“GET TO OUR SIDE, GO!” he commanded, pushing the attacker away from him.

“Thanks for the backup!” Illumina called over his shoulder as he raced across the battlefield, holding the banner high above his head and aiming for the direction where the water had come from, hoping the damage would deter the enemies from following him.



Back on the Athenian side, Calvin whooped and pumped his fist in the air, “xNestorio strikes again! You just don’t-!”

His cheering was cut short as Technoblade’s seemingly unconscious body came into view, lying face down in the muddy field. He glanced up at Nestor who simply waved him off.

“Get to him!” he called out, “I’ll deal with the water boy!” he jumped down from his spot in the trees and made a beeline towards George.

The water boy in question sat on his knees in a dry patch of land, clutching his shoulder, the arrow having landed directly between the chinks of his armor. His screams had been abruptly cut off by the sudden impact, he simply fell to his knees in shock, staring blankly at the damage he had caused without really seeing any of it.

In a daze, George noted the man in the drenched suit leap out of a tree and into a graceful roll before making his way towards him, while the other had ran to Techno’s side, flipping him over and checking his pulse frantically before shaking his head and beginning compressions.

The man who was approaching him had crouched down in front of him and placed a hand on his uninjured shoulder. George vaguely registered some sort of question being asked, but hadn’t thought twice about it when nodding in agreement.

Honestly, he was getting pretty sick and tired of his heartbeat drowning out what everyone was saying, because he really would’ve liked to hear the warning the suited man had given him before he pulled the arrow out of his shoulder in one swift tug.

He screamed and rolled onto the ground, causing Nestor to wince and glance fearfully at the water underneath him.

“What the FUCK!” he cried, trying to press his hand to the wound.

“Don’t worry buddy, I gotcha,” Nestor reassured him once he realized that they wouldn’t be going for another swim at the moment, “Do you think I can help you take off that armor?” he asked carefully.

George hesitated for a moment, but decided that if the guy really *had* wanted to kill him, he could have already done so with ease the moment he approached him. He nodded and the man smiled at him.

“Okay, I’m going to pull out a small knife now so I can cut the straps, that way you won’t have to move your arms too much, is that okay?” he asked gently, “I won’t unsheath it at all, I’ll just be using the strap cutter on the handle.”

“O-okay,” George stammered in response.

He smiled again and reached into his suit jacket, pulling out the small knife, “I’m Nestor by the way, who’re you?”

“I’m George, I thought *everyone* knew who I was?” he asked puzzled.

“Ha! That’s a little arrogant, isn’t it?” Nestor chuckled and swiped the strap holding George’s shoulder pads through a groove in the handle, the armor clattered off.

“N-no not in that way! I just meant, like, you know,” he waved his uninjured arm around vaguely, “The whole son of Poseidon thing? Lightning bolt thief? Celebrity crush stealer?”

“Oh, yeah, probably should’ve figured it out by the whole water thing,” he chuckled, “The first two are definitely ringing a bell, not sure about that last one though. I only heard about you through rumors around the cabin, Cal and I were a little caught up in our training when you made your debut so we didn’t really get to see you.” Nestor remarked, rolling up the sleeve of George’s t-shirt to take a look at the wound, “Well the good news is, my precision is still amazing, the wound won’t even scar! It’s just gonna hurt a bit for a while, you’re going on a quest soon, right?”

George nodded, “W-wait, you’re the one that hit me?”

“Whoops! Yeah, sorry about that, there really was no other way to snap you out of your whole thing though,” he reasoned, “Good for you on the quest by the way! Not everyone gets lucky enough to get sent on one on their first day! The injury might bother you a little for the first couple of days but it’ll be back in business in no time,” he patted George’s arm and reached into his suit jacket again for a clean rag, “it’s not usually this wet” he said sheepishly, “but it should still work!”

He began to tie it around the injured shoulder, quietly humming an upbeat tune, though it suddenly cut off as he seemed to come to a realization, “Uh, you *are* a righty, right? I tried to make sure I wouldn’t hit your dominant hand so I’d do the least amount of damage I possibly could, but I really had to make a guess there.”

“Y-yeah, don’t even worry about it,” he gulped, realizing how, with his accuracy, the smiling, cheery man beside him could’ve easily murdered him in a second. He decided against telling him that he was actually left-handed. “W-who’s your parent, by the way?” he asked, trying to make small talk.

“Oh! Most people think it’s Apollo because of my shots but I’m actually an Ares kid, pretty cool huh? Had to do a quest for Artemis a while back, a huge honor by the way, she helped me get as good as I am.”

“I see,” George nodded, though he had no idea who Artemis was and wouldn’t dare to ask.

“There, you’re all patched up! I’m gonna go make sure Calvin isn’t accidentally crushing Techno’s ribs while attempting CPR,” he chuckled and rose to his feet, though he couldn’t mask the nervousness that leaked into his voice.

“CPR?” he asked, glancing past Nestor and catching sight of the steady rhythm of Calvin’s compressions. In an instant, the realization of what he had done hit him full force. The image of the immobilized figure of the great king, uncrowned, drenched, and disheveled, lying in the mud etched itself into his mind. He closed his eyes, but the picture remained, taunting and accusing.

“Yeah, you sure did a number on ‘em,” Nestor patted him on the back, oblivious to George’s panic, “but he’ll be fi-”

“HOLY SHIT!” he screeched, “I FUCKING DROWNED HIM!”

“What?! No, no!” Nestor called out in reassurance.

Calvin’s head snapped upwards as he scoffed, “UH, FUCKING YES HE DID! THE MAN’S NOT BREATHING!”

Nestor’s eyes widened at Calvin’s accusation, giving him a look that screamed ‘Why would you say *that*?!’

“Oh no... oh no no no no NO NO WHAT DO I DO NOW, I FUCKING KILLED A GUY! I

KILLED HIM!” George screamed, his fingers tangling into his hair as he pulled on it.

“You didn’t kill him! He’s fine!” Nestor insisted, “I need you to calm down, okay? You can’t help Techno when you’re freaking out all over the place,” he patted his shoulder comfortingly, but his consolations fell on deaf ears as George’s breathing grew more and more frantic.

“I killed him, I killed him, I killed him, I didn’t mean to, I swear, I SWEAR I didn’t!” he looked up at Nestor with pleading eyes and heavy breaths, “*you* b-believe me, right!? You-you *know* I didn’t mean to, I-I’m sorry, I’m so sorry,” he sobbed, clinging onto the hem of the other demigod’s suit desperately.

Nestor’s eyes flitted hesitantly between Techno and the crying boy holding on to him.

“GET HIM TO SHUT IT I NEED TO CONCENTRATE!” yelled Calvin, and Nestor nodded, George hardly hearing them past his own shuddering breaths.

“George, hey,” Nestor whispered, crouched down to his eye level and placing steady hands on both of his arms. George released his grip on the hem of his suit jacket in favor of throwing himself over the man’s shoulder, heavy sobs wracking his body as his tears stained the already drenched blazer. Nestor’s eyes widened, but he didn’t pull away, simply shifting his position to rub calming circles into George’s back, “listen buddy, everything’s fine, alright? Calvin is taking care of him, we’ve both been trained in CPR, I was just kidding before when I said he might crush his ribs, it was a bad joke, I’m sorry.”

“N-no I’M sorry, he’s gone, he’s gone, I didn’t MEAN to!” George repeated.

“He’s not gone, I’ve known him for a *little* bit longer than you, some dirty creek water isn’t gonna be the thing to take him out.”

“W-WAIT he’s your *brother*, right?!” he asked, his eyes widening in horror, “I-I KILLED SOMEBODY’S BROTHER! I KILLED *Y-YOUR* BROTHER! I’m so fucking s-sorry!” he burst into another wave of tears, images of his own brother swirling through his mind, “I-I would never- I *know* what it’s like! I wouldn’t do that to you- to *anyone*! I never meant- I DON’T WANT THIS!”

Nestor sighed, getting ready to reassure George, once again, that Techno would be fine, though at this point he wasn’t sure if he was convincing George or himself of that fact. However the sound of vomiting and barking coughs made him instantly forget his monologue, all doubt erased from his mind, as both he and George swiveled their heads in its direction.

“HE LIVES!” Calvin cheered, as Technoblade leaned on his side and cleared his lungs of the muddy creek water, “I FUCKING DID IT!”

“Woohoo! The king lives on!” Nestor cheered, releasing one arm from George’s death grip to pump it in the air.

With one final heave, the remainder of the water poured out of Techno’s mouth and he gasped for air, he slowly turned his head up to lock eyes with George, “T-Technoblade,” he rasped, “never d-dies,” giving him a shaky smile and a thumbs up before promptly passing out.

Calvin moved him into a recovery position before collapsing to the ground beside him in relief, “Oh gods that was the *worst* thing I’ve ever had to do in my entire fucking life. Fuck water, man, I’m drinking nothing but Monster and G Fuel till the day I die.”

George blinked away the tears from his eyes, relief washing over him, “He-he’s fine,” he whispered, as he let Nestor pull out of the hug, “he’s alive.”

“Told you so!” said Nestor cheerfully, though the relief on his face was apparent, “if he didn’t pass out that quickly he’d probably also say ‘not even close’ or something like that. I think the game is pretty much over by the way, we definitely have to get a medic on the scene.”

“Over, why?” George asked, unaware of the events unfolding across the forest, “I mean, I definitely don’t wanna play anymore after all that but how is it over?”

As soon as the words left his mouth, Illumina came crashing through the bushes before them, running for his life while carrying the Ares flag above his head. A herd of brown team (apparently red team) members came up right behind him, their pant legs muddy from wading through the flooded forest, but it was too late. Illumina had already made it across into friendly territory and the blue team exploded into cheers. The banner shimmered and turned a sparkling shade of silver. The boar and spear were replaced with a huge caduceus, the symbol of cabin eleven.

The conch horn sounded. The game was over. The blue team had won.

“That’s why,” Nestor sighed, a disappointed smile making its way to his face, “It was basically a race to see who could get to it first, and since the three of us were caught up here...” he trailed off, George easily making up the rest of his sentence.

“Gods DAMMIT!” Calvin cried from his place on the floor, his fist splashing against the muddy ground in frustration, “Ughhhh, I owe people *money* now, FUCK you water b-!”

A thunderous roar echoed through the woods, bringing the cheers to a sudden halt, as several trees were razed to the ground, the cracking and crunching of hundred year bark almost rivalling the deafening sound. Wood nymphs and forest creatures alike, ran in a panic towards the open field where George and the other campers lay, many of the creatures hiding behind crowds of sword-wielding demigods, in hopes of any amount of protection from the phantom beast.

“What the fuck?” Calvin picked his head up off the ground, propping himself on his elbows, “Whose dog got loose?”

“I don’t think that’s a dog, buddy,” Nestor remarked, eyebrows raised, he slowly retreated from the forest, dragging George along with him.

The roaring grew louder, transforming into a series of howls as a huge beast resembling a giant black hound came crashing out of the woods, leaping into the clearing and causing half the campers and the creatures seeking refuge behind them to scatter, screaming in fear.

“OH SHIT, NOT A DOG NOT A DOG!” Calvin yelled, scrambling to his feet.

The creature snarled as its glowing eyes combed through the screaming mob, razor-sharp fangs dripping with drool, when its gaze finally landed on a frozen George.

*Terrible timing with that monster, gods.*

“George, RUN!” Nestor shouted, pulling him to his feet and sprinting away.

George ran, or rather slid, after him, the muddy ground causing him to slip at every other step.

“Nestor back up the tree! Shoot it down!” Calvin called out, grabbing a discarded arrow off the ground and hurling it at the archer, who caught it without so much as a second glance.

As Nestor launched himself off of a forgotten shield and onto a tree, George threw himself into the bushes, hoping that the branches would slow down the beast and make it choose some other target.

His hopes were quickly dashed into a million pieces as the hound only thundered into the brambles right behind him, seeming to grow angrier and faster as the branches scratched it.

“WHY ME!?” he screeched, clawing his way through the underbrush and tumbling onto a clear path. He made a split second decision, taking the direction he prayed would lead him back to where he came from in hopes that Nestor was already up his tree and ready to make another shot.

He dashed into the open space, the bushes having put some distance between him and the beast, “SHOOT IT SHOOT IT SHOOT IT HELP!”

He glanced over his shoulder and immediately tripped over a giant log that lay directly in his path. He came down hard, getting mud and dirt all over his face just as the creature burst into the clearing. He turned around, scrambling backwards when his eyes locked on the log he tripped over. It wasn't a log.

“Oh no,” he groaned, glancing between the monster and the unconscious figure on the ground, “If this is the last thing I get to say, I am so sorry Technoblade.”

From his tree, Nestor locked onto his target, quickly winding back his bow. He'd have to make this shot count, the silver would kill it instantly as long as he hit something vital. He took in a deep breath, aimed, and...

“DON'T WORRY TECHNOBLADE, I'LL SAVE YOU!”

A giant branch burst out of the tree, hitting Nestor squarely in the shoulder just as he fired his shot and the arrow went sailing into the muddy trench left behind by the dried out creek, saving the life of the small blonde child that came charging off the top of a tree, screaming a battle cry as he landed directly on the creature's back.

“YEAH YOU HELLHOUND BITCH! HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT, HUH?!”

“TOMMY, WHY?!” George screamed, watching in horror as his only hope of the beast being killed flew off into the mud and disappeared forever.

“Oh look at you, George! You're such a coward! I'm *easily* beating this beast with my amazing power! I've made it my bit- AHH!”

The beast leaped forward, cutting off Tommy's monologue as he grabbed onto its ears for dear life.

“WHAT THE FUCK IS IT DOING?”

“IT'S TRYING TO GET YOU OFF!”

“WHY? THIS CREATURE IS STUPID! KILL IT!”

“WE WERE *TRYING* TO-!”

“TRY *HARDER* ! AHHH!”

The hellhound bucked around wildly, jostling Tommy every which way, the movements made worse as its position was redirected each time Tommy tugged on its ears so he wouldn't fall off.

“IS THIS A FUCKING RODEO?! AMERICANS DO THIS BULLSHIT FOR FUN?!”

“I DON'T KNOW I'M NOT AMERICAN!” George sobbed.

Despite his predicament, Tommy still managed to shoot him a fleeting look of disgust, though his expression quickly morphed back into panic as the beast abandoned the rodeo route and decided to try to scrape him off.

“NO NO NO YOU STUPID IDIOT BITCH DOG!” Tommy cried as the hellhound crashed into the bushes, the branches tugging at his limbs, threatening to tear him off the creatures back.

With a final cry of twenty different profanities at once, Tommy and the hellhound disappeared into the forest.

The remaining campers held their breath, listening. After a tense minute, a barrage of insults questioning the beast’s intelligence ripped out from deep within the woods and they all sighed in relief.

George got up to his feet and wiped the dirt off of his face. He glanced down at Technoblade, and immediately felt guilty again. He remembered the way the crowned demigod had held himself before the game, all glowing and confident, his kingly attire sparkling and probably fresh out of the dry cleaners. Now the crown lay forgotten in a puddle somewhere, his hair was caked with mud and twigs, and his entire outfit was completely drenched.

This wasn’t even mentioning the mans position as his arm was tangled up in his cape, and his head was positioned at an angle that would definitely add ‘stiff neck’ to the list of sustained injuries, though this was entirely George’s fault as he had caused the poor man to roll out of the safe recovery position into... that.

George winced, unsure of how to even approach the guy, though he didn’t have to as Calvin beat him to it. Unclipping the cape, he pulled the man into a sitting position, tugging Techno’s arms over his shoulder and hoisting him onto his back like a human knapsack.

“We probably have, like, one minute before that little bastard comes running back here with that monster chasing him,” Calvin remarked.

“What the hell was that thing?!” George asked.

“A fucking hellhound,” he replied, “they’re not supposed to be able to get into camp, the only way it could’ve gotten in here is if somebody from the inside summoned it.”

The remaining campers eyed George warily, shuffling away from him as they tightened their holds on their weapons.

“Wh- it wasn’t me!” he cried.

“Pff anyone who thinks it was you is an idiot,” he chuckled, “you don’t know how to do shit! Now let’s get you and Techno out of here so I can go help take the thing down before it eats Tommy.”

“EATS HIM?!”

“Eh, it’d spit him right back out, I wouldn’t worry too much.”

Another scream echoed through the forest.

“Okay I might worry a little bit,” Calvin corrected himself.

“Is there anything I can do to help?”

“PFFT no-!”

“IT’S COMING BACK!” a voice cried near the forest.

George’s head snapped in the direction of the sound as a fox skittered into the clearing from between the trees.

“SHIT! Okay, can you carry him?!” Calvin asked frantically, without awaiting a response he dumped the man into George’s arms, causing him to stumble back, “Go to where the creek was and get down! Don’t come back up until I say so, okay!?”

George nodded, ignoring his screaming shoulder as he ran back and practically threw himself into the drained ditch, Technoblade’s body cushioning his fall.

“Oh god, I’m so sorry,” he whispered, his hands ghosting over the demigod as he tried to lay him down semi-comfortably in the mud.

“I don’t think he can hear you,” somebody noted quietly from beside him.

“Who said that!?” George called, turning his head frantically from side to side and spotting no one. The only living thing in sight being the tiny water creatures, flopping around uselessly in their now dried up habitat, and the fox from beforehand, which seemingly decided to take refuge with him in the ditch.

“Me,” it said, staring directly at him, “don’t scream.”

George screamed, quickly clamping his own hand over his mouth.

“I said don’t scream!” it whisper-shouted.

“You can’t just be a talking fox and tell me not to scream!” George whisper-shouted back at it.

“Oh c’mon-!” it’s indignant cries were immediately cut off by more fast-approaching yells from within the woods.

“IT’S STILL ON US TUBBO, RUN RUN RUN!”

“I’M RUNNING I’M RUNNING!”

George and the fox peeked their heads from out of the trench, spotting two children tumbling into the clearing. Tommy came out first, pushing a branch out of his way and nearly hitting the boy behind him as he let it snap back into place. Realizing his mistake, Tommy slowed to apologize and the boy crashed directly into him, sending them both flying to the ground as the hellhound burst in after them.

Noticing its targets on the ground, the hellhound howled in delight and began slowly approaching them as they scrambled back in fear.

“WHY’D YOU LET IT GO TUBBO WHY!?”

“I’M SORRY I DIDN’T MEAN TO! YOU SAID-!”

“I DIDN’T SAY ANYTHING THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT TUBBO!” Tommy cried as the shadow of the hellhound fell over them, he clung to the boy beside him, “YOU’RE SO STUPID AND WE’RE GOING TO DIE!”

“YOU’RE RIGHT IT’S MY FAULT I’M SORRY TOMMY!” he hugged him back and they both screamed, screwing their eyes shut.

An arrow whizzed past George’s head, burying itself into the beast’s neck with a resounding *thunk* . In an instant the creature froze and exploded, showering the screaming boys in a cloud of fine, golden dust.

“This was a very convenient spot to leave a bow,” a tired voice remarked from behind. Both George and the fox turning backwards to get a better look.

“Hey, you’re up!” the fox cried out, running in circles like an overexcited dog.

“Kind of hard not to be with all this screaming, can’t a guy take a nap in the middle of a giant monster attack?” he asked dryly, tossing the bow into a murky puddle beside him. He slumped down again, breathing out a sigh of relief, as the hellhound was finally defeated.

George took a step towards him, grabbing his own shoulder as he stumbled forward, “H-how are you feeling?” He stammered out awkwardly, avoiding eye contact with the undrowned man.

Technoblade pursed his lips and gestured towards himself, calling attention specifically to his muddy attire and drenched appearance, “about as good as I look,” he drawled out, letting his hands drop to his sides.

A mischievous glint entered the fox’s eye, “How does being handsome feel-?”

“Stop. I want to *die* .” Technoblade cut him off, “I need ambrosia and an Advil and a sledgehammer to the skull to knock me out again. Existence is pain.”

George stared at him in horror, unsure how to respond. Noticing the look on his face Technoblade burst into laughter, though it quickly devolved into a barking cough as he clutched his side painfully.

“Mmmm broken ribs, my favorite,” he rasped and craned his neck past George to look at the fox, “can you get me out of here? This guy’s got a shoulder injury,” he nodded at the makeshift bandage.

George blinked at him, “A-are you talking to the fox?”

“Yeah, I’m a little more confident in the fox’s upper body strength than yours,” he admitted, eyeing George’s noodle arms.

“Oh come ON! I think I have a *little* bit of a leg up against a *fox* !”

“Are you *sure* ?” the fox asked from behind him.

George rolled his eyes, “*Yes* I’m sure!” he turned to glare at the fox only to find that it had vanished. In its place stood a tall, slim man with hair so fluffy he almost didn’t notice the twitching pair of fox ears nestled within it. Behind the ears sat a torn black hat, adorned with two golden pins, that somehow seamlessly transitioned into his hair. A thick, golden chain hung off the collar of his black trench coat, purposely left unbuttoned, revealing a faded grey shirt, tucked into an expensive looking pair of pants being held up by a pair of triangular-patterned belts.

The man smiled wolfishly, *foxishly*?, at his stunned expression. Taking the shorter demigod’s silence as a retraction of his previous statement, the fox man stepped around him to reach the fallen king, giving George a clear view of his bushy, white-tipped tail.



Techno chuckled from his spot on the ground and raised his arms, “Oh ho, you’re approaching me?” he coughed weakly.

“I can’t help you up without getting closer,” the furry responded with the dryness of a man who’s had the same line recited to him countless times before.

He knelt down and wrapped Techno’s arm around his neck, the man’s chuckles turning into hisses of pain with each movement.

“Name’s Fundy, by the way,” he said, attempting to adjust Techno into a slightly more comfortable position, “just thought I should let you know *before* you started referring to me as ‘the furry’ in your head.”

“Aren’t you hot in that thing?” George blurted out.

Fundy blinked at him in surprise as Technoblade fell into another round of laughing and painful hacking.

“The cosplaying fur-man reveals himself to you and the only question you have is ‘*Aren’t you hot in that thing*’ ?!” He wheezed and groaned in pain, nearly collapsing to the ground if it weren’t for Fundy supporting his weight.

“Take it easy!” he called, hoisting him back up as he lifted Techno’s legs into his arms, “Also yes, actually, it *is* hot in this thing, thank you for asking.”

“Y-yeah no problem,” George stammered.

The fox man climbed over the edge of the trench with a surprising amount of ease considering the added weight in his arms. George followed closely behind him, the view of a relieved group of campers celebrating the defeat of the hellhound greeted them on the other side.

“TECHNOBLADE!” Tommy cried out, seemingly the first to spot them, his shouts causing the other campers to take notice of the injured warrior.

He dashed towards the man and began shouting excitedly, “You woke up! Did you see how I saved you from the monster!? I’m so great, I was even the one to *kill it*, you know? You weren’t there though so you didn’t get to see, but I scared it off — I did — I said ‘Hellhound dog you are a BITCH and I, TommyInnit, am a manly man who will *beat* you!’ Now the dog didn’t understand English but it *saw* how manly and strong I was so it evaporated in- in *fear* . I saved everyone here, including you, so you should be very thankful.”

Fundy’s eye twitched, his tail flicking around in irritation, “I don’t-”

“Yeah, thanks Tommy, I’m very grateful,” Techno assured him, patting Fundy on the back in a gesture of solidarity to the brave soldier as they both stood before Tommy’s bullshit.

Tommy puffed his chest out in pride, “Well you wanna know what I think? I think you should let me wear your crown today because you were not very king-like at all, Technoblade. You just laid down on the floor the whole time like ‘oh look at me I’m Technoblade, I almost drowned because of George, I have to faint now while TommyInnit saves me from a monster’-!”

“Yeah yeah, you can have it,” Techno cut in, already reaching his maximum allotted dose of bullshit in a mere 2 minutes, “but just answer me one question, can you do that?”

“Hmmm, I suppose I can,” Tommy falsely contemplated, “after all you asked me so kindly and I

am a very generous man.”

“Okay, how did you know that I almost drowned?” Techno’s raised an eyebrow, “we never said anything about the whole battle that went down, right George?”

George looked at Techno and then back to Tommy, “Huh, you’re right, we didn’t,” he remarked, feeling a smile tugging at the corner of his lips as Tommy’s expression morphed from confident to concerned.

“Pff, haha, that’s easy!” Tommy stammered, “y-y-you’re clothes are all wet, obviously you almost drowned! What, a-are you trying to say that you just went for a *swim* mid-game?! Huh?! Is THAT what you’re trying to tell me?! Don’t be *stupid* Technoblade, that would be a *stupid* thing to do.”

“Tommy, you said that I almost drowned ‘ *because of George* ’, how did you know-?”

“I ALREADY ANSWERED ONE OF YOUR QUESTIONS, I DON’T NEED TO ANSWER ANOTHER ONE TECHNOBITCH!” Tommy declared, spinning around on his heel and attempting to get past the crowd that had formed around them. They all stood their ground, not letting him through.

“Tommy,” Technoblade’s voice had taken on a tone of warning, and despite the fact that he was sitting in Fundy’s arms, unable to move on his own, he was still as menacing as ever, “I seem to recall George screaming something about how you told him my ‘plan’. That’s kind of funny, actually, because *I personally* don’t remember telling you anything. Now George, do you think you can tell me what it is exactly that Tommy told you? You know, the thing that sent you into a panic and caused you to almost drown me and *two other people*?” he glared at a cowering Tommy, the boy had begun to sweat profusely, his eyes darting between the menacing scowls of his fellow campers.

“Y-yeah,” George replied, suddenly not feeling so smug about exposing Tommy as the attention was brought back to his near-assassination of the other demigods, “He said that you were planning on hunting me down and beating me up.”

“Did he?!” Technoblade cried in mock surprise, “Oh wow! Why didn’t anybody tell me that?! I was doing a pretty terrible job for somebody who was supposed to be set on beating you up, don’t you think?”

George chuckled nervously, not wanting to agree in case the question was a trap.

“N-n-now now, let’s be reasonable here!” Tommy cried, waving his hands up and down to calm down the masses, “do you guys *genuinely* believe this new guy?! Over ME?!”

The crowd muttered in confirmation and Tommy scowled, “Oh COME ON! Why would I even *say* such a thing?! Why would I want George to hurt my dear good friend Technoblade! We *are* friends, right Technoblade?! I would NEVER wish to bring harm upon you that would be TERRIBLE — that would be AWFUL!”

“Tommy do you remember the bet we made yesterday? When George first came into camp?”

“Shit,” Tommy whispered under his breath, “No! I don’t! Sorry! I had a really good time talking with you, Technoblade. I should be going now though, I think I hear my, uh, my mum calling me, it’s a school night after all!”

“It’s summer,” Fundy scoffed.

“People in *Australia* have school, Fundy,” Tommy replied, trying to salvage his crumbling argument, “don’t be stupid!”

“We’re not-”

“I’m leaving and you can’t stop me!” he cut in, trying to push past the crowd again and failing. He sighed and turned to Technoblade with pleading eyes, the man only glared at him in response. With a defeated groan, he dropped to the ground and scrambled in between the legs of the guards, cries of indignance and frustration rippling through them as he popped out of the other side with a triumphant cry, “TommyInnit — out!” and with that, he dashed into the woods and disappeared.

“Just let him go, he knows what he did,” Technoblade sighed, wincing at the action, “Now can you *please* get me to the infirmary? I’m going to throw up on your cosplay.”

“Please don’t,” Fundy wrinkled his nose in disgust.

“EVERYONE WHO ISN’T INJURED OR ASSISTING THE INJURED, PLEASE MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE PAVILION, THAT INCLUDES EVERYONE WHO’S ON CLEANUP DUTY! ALL FURTHER ACTIVITIES WILL BE PUT ON HOLD UNTIL CHIRON FINISHES ADDRESSING TODAY’S EVENTS!”

Someone had announced from behind the crowd as they began to disperse.

“Hey Fundy, you got it handled over here?” a voice asked to their right. Turning, George spotted Calvin approaching them, a gleaming crown in his hand.

“Yeah, I can take him, you can lead George to the pavilion, I don’t think he knows the way out.”

“Probably not,” Calvin chuckled, wiping the crown on his sleeve one last time before placing it on Techno’s mud-soaked hair, “keep your head up, king, your crown is falling.”

Techno snorted and ran his fingers over the blue gem in its center, pausing as he noticed a small purple flower wrapped around his wrist, he puzzled over it for a moment before shrugging it off, “thanks Calvin, Tommy probably would’ve gotten his hands on it if you hadn’t, and gods know what he would do with that.”

“Probably execute everyone who doesn’t address him as an ‘Alpha Male’,” Fundy rolled his eyes.

“He can’t do that, can he?” George piped in, causing the other demigods to burst into laughter.

Calvin placed a hand on George’s uninjured shoulder as he and Techno both started coughing, albeit for different reasons. “Oh gods,” he managed out, “let’s just get you to the pavilion before you embarrass yourself even more.”

With a wave of goodbye to the other two, Calvin steered George out of the cursed clearing, and after a few minutes of silent walking, they stepped out of the woods into open fields and clear blue skies. If George hadn’t been so drained he might’ve cried tears of joy at the view. Instead, his stomach did the crying for him as it grumbled loudly, causing Calvin to tense up beside him.

“Man I’m fucking traumatized from you, don’t make any weird sounds,” he clapped him on the back, “but I agree, it’s *definitely* lunch time.”

Following the rest of the stragglers, they entered the mess hall, parting ways as Calvin went to sit with the rest of his siblings at the Ares table.

“GEORGE!” Sapnap’s voice rang out above the din of the crowd. He turned to follow the sound of his voice and immediately spotted a gross yellow monstrosity over at the Hephaestus table, sitting right across from Sapnap, “COME OVER HERE!”

Dream turned his head at Sapnap’s shouts and locked eyes with George from across the crowd. George froze, expecting a lecture about recklessness and self-endangerment from the son of Athena, but instead, a huge smile broke out onto his face as he patted the empty space beside him.

“COME OVER AND SIT HERE!” He shouted over the commotion of the dining pavilion, “WE’VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU!”

George felt his heart flutter inside of him, *Waiting for me?!*, he smiled as he sprinted towards the Hephaestus table, stumbling over a knotted piece of grass as he slotted himself in beside Dream, “Where were you guys this whole time?! You left me all on my own!”

Sapnap chuckled and grabbed his sides, “Well, *I* was all for getting to you but *this guy* over here,” he jerked his thumb in Dream’s direction “just couldn’t keep his hands off me!”

“Pff, you wish!” Dream teased as he slapped Sapnap’s hand away from his face, “you were in the way, dumbass, I needed to secure victory and be a *winner*, unlike you.”

“I WASN’T IN THE WAY!” Sapnap cried, throwing his arms up in the air, “I was just trying to get to Illumina! I was nowhere near you!”

“THAT’S CALLED BEING IN THE WAY YOU IDIOT!” Dream stood up and slammed his hands on the table, completely ignoring the dirty looks from other campers as he closed the distance between him and the petulant son of Hephaestus. “Going for the guy who stole *your* flag and is about to make *us* win *is* being in the way!”

“Okay,” Sapnap huffed, “but you didn’t have to continue fighting me after the horn blared!” He folded his arms and turned his nose up at Dream as he looked away in offense. Or rather tried he to, as the smile tugging at the corners of his lips said otherwise.

Dream chuckled as he sat back down, “yeah that part was for fun,” he wiped away a tear as Sapnap’s head turned at such a breakneck pace, George was surprised he didn’t get secondhand whiplash, “you’re *really* bad-”

“I AM NOT-”

“Yes you are!” Dream interrupted, cutting off Sapnap’s attempt at a redemption as he turned to face George, “by the way,” he laughed as he clapped George’s back, “the water thing you did today was totally-!”

“EVERYONE, PLEASE SETTLE DOWN!” Chiron’s voice rang out from the makeshift podium bringing the entire pavilion down to a murmur, “I’m sure there are quite a few questions to be asked and quite a few versions of the ‘truth’ circulating around.”

A few mutters of agreement rose from the crowd, but quickly died down as Chiron proceeded, “I believe the first thing we should address is the hellhound. For those of you who are unaware, a hellhound was summoned today during our game.”

Amidst the gasps and hushed chatters, Dream and Sapnap turned to look at George with wide, disbelieving eyes.

“A FUCKING hellhound?!”

“THAT’S what the yelling was about?!”

“As you all may or may not know, hellhounds reside within the Fields of Punishment, they torture souls and guard the many entrances that lead to the Underworld, it is not possible for a monster of such caliber to make its way into our walls unless it had been brought in specifically by somebody from the inside. Now, unless any of you would like to admit that they are the perpetrator and give a good reasoning as to why they summoned the beast, then we must assume that there is a traitor in our midst.”

Nobody made a sound, everyone making a silent plea that Tommy would pipe up and say something about him being a man and that the hellhound was nothing more than a dog bitch and he did it just for fun because he wanted to prove himself and that would be that, but his loud excuses were nowhere to be heard.

Chiron sighed, looking off into the distance before bringing up his second point.

“Moving on,” he refocused, looking out towards the pavilion tables, “there is now the matter of the forest flooding and our dried up creek.”

Dream clapped George on the back and grinned at him proudly, the shorter demigod smiled but not before briefly scowling as the pain in his shoulder flared up.

“During the game, a camper had lost control of his abilities and accidentally raised the creek in order to defend himself from what he incorrectly perceived as a threat.” A small contingent of Ares kids began to laugh while others snickered loudly. Chiron looked at the offending table and paused his announcement, the full brunt of his gaze aimed in their direction. The perpetrators quickly died down as a result and Chiron picked off where he’d left off, “Regardless, the three other campers involved in the fight were all, fortunately, highly skilled warriors, and were able to handle the situation with zero fatalities. Technoblade, our head counselor for the Ares cabin, was the only one heavily injured in the scuffle as he received the full force of the attack.”

A second wave of Ares kids, as well as several other campers from different tables, erupted from their seats as everyone collectively decided to turn their heads and stare at the newbie who had taken down the crowned king of the Ares cabin. For the second time that day, Dream and Sappnap turned to look at George with wide, disbelieving eyes.

“YOU TOOK DOWN TECHNOBLADE?!”

“BY ACCIDENT?!”

“Ugh, it was fucking awful,” George groaned, lying his head on the table and burying his face in his arms, “I almost drowned him! He wasn’t breathing!”

“I THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST TESTING OUT YOUR WATER POWERS OR SOMETHING?!” Dream shouted, slapping his hand onto his forehead and dragging it down his face, “I DIDN’T KNOW YOU PERSONALLY HAD IT OUT FOR HIM?!”

“YOU ALMOST MURDERED TECHNOBLADE, FLOODED OUR FOREST, DRAINED OUR CREEK, AND IT WAS ALL AN ACCIDENT?!” Sappnap beamed beside him with misguided admiration, “GEORGE YOU’RE FUCKING INSANE!”

Burying his face even deeper into his arms, George snapped “I almost got eaten by that fucking hellhound from earlier, in case you were wondering, and please don’t say I *almost* murdered him, that makes it sound like I had planned it from the start!.”

“YOU WERE THERE FOR THE- WAIT CHIRON SAID YOU WERE FIGHTING TWO OTHER PEOPLE WITH TECHNO, WAS IT ACTUALLY-?”

“Ugh,” George groaned, not seeming to catch a break anytime soon, “it was some guy named Nestor with this terrifyingly accurate bow skill and another dude named Calvin who basically saved Techno’s life and told me where to run when the hellhound attacked-”

“DREAM! DREAM! DREEEEEAAMM!” Sapnap’s shouts cut him off as he grabbed Dream by the shoulders and began shaking him violently, “HE’S SUCH A KEEPER! LOOK AT HIM! HE BEAT THEM BY ACCIDENT! *BY ACCIDENT* ! IMAGINE HOW GOOD HE COULD GET IF HE ACTUALLY TRIED!”

“Sapnap this is a fucking disaster.” Dream groaned, allowing himself to fall victim to Sapnap’s incessant rattling.

“In WHAT world is this a *disaster* ?! This is the best thing I’ve ever heard of in my entire life-!”

“Sapnap he’s a HAZARD!” Dream yelled back, turning to George with clenched fists and barred teeth, “I can’t believe I thought you did this on purpose, of course you did this all by FUCKING accident-”

“What the hell are you talking about-?”

“Sapnap,” Dream tensed, slapping away Sapnap’s hands off his shoulders, “think about this for a second, if George did all of this by accident, WITHOUT realizing or even WANTING to, then how can we be sure he won’t *accidentally* raise a creek on US?!”

Sapnap paused, Dream’s words quickly sobering him up, “but what about Tech-?”

“Oh my GODS, FORGET TECHNO! THAT WAS A FLUKE, A ONE TIME THING! LOOK AT GEORGE! HE’S UNTRAINED AND DANGEROUS! I DON’T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN HELPING HIM OUT SO THAT HE WON’T ACCIDENTALLY *MURDER* ONE OF US WITH A WATER BOTTLE?!”

Despite covering his head tightly with his arms, George’s ears began to ring with all the screaming around him. He opened his mouth to defend himself but a familiar feeling washed over him.

*Oh no, not now, not again* , he thought to himself as his vision blurred, black spots dancing around his eyes, *ugh fine* .

And with that he slumped forward, his head hitting the side of the table painfully before he fell off into a never ending darkness.

## Chapter End Notes

And now for the big surprise! The long awaited TommyInnit oneshot series has finally been uploaded!

If you'd like to see Tommy's point of view for this chapter and find out what kind of shenanigans he gets up to while the team is off on their quest then you should definitely check it out! It's the second work uploaded in this series, hope you like it!

Also there will be more in the future, with more one shots of other youtubers!

# Keeping it in the Family || Dream

## Chapter Notes

Sorry for the shorter update today guys! We wanted to take this week to finally finish updating the rest of the old chapters and we're happy to announce that they are complete! All the old chapters have been reworked and rewired for a more cohesive storyline with MAJOR changes so please feel free take a look at all of those! We hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*“Ha! I tagged you! You’re frozen!”*

*“Don’t worry Dream! I got you! Run away! She’s coming back!”*

*Dream chased after the figure in front of him, a fit of giggles erupting from their mouths as the girl chased after them. They ran and ran until they hit the side of the highway, the open field behind them transforming into a green forest.*

*A car whizzed past them blasting loud heavy metal music and the person beside him laughed.*

*A blue bird with huge eyes chirped in a tree above him and landed on his shoulder.*

*“Looks like he likes you, Dream! Don’t leave me behind for him!” the boy beside him chuckled, before turning to him nervously, “Y-you wouldn’t do that, right?”*

*The bird chirped happily and the boy elbowed him in the ribs, his arm burning to the touch. The happy twitters in his ear suddenly turned into hacking coughs and the bird dropped into his hands, the blue feathers turning grey.*

*“Dream! What’d you DO?!”*

*The bird continued coughing as it lay down in his palms, staring at him with pleading eyes.*

*“You have to save him! Don’t let hi-!”*

*The voice cut off as the image before him fizzled, streaks of black and grey ran across his vision like a shitty TV setup. The hum of static and the drone of cathode tubes filled his ears with growing apprehension.*

*“How do you know this fucking thing’s on anyway?” a distorted, pissed-off voice asked through the haze. Their silhouette only vaguely visible through the weird TV static his dream had taken on.*

*“It says we’re LIVE and on AIR,” another voice grumbled in the background, “You can start com-mu-ni-ca-ting with him now, he can hear-”*

*“But can he SEE me?! I need him to SEE me you stupid fucking-!”*



*“I can see you just fine,” Dream lied, the stranger’s silhouette turning, it now unmistakably faced him through the haze . “Who the fuck are you?!”*

*“What?!” The stranger recoiled with offense , “you can see me, but you don’t RECOGNIZE me?!”*

*Dream paused, uncertain if he should keep up the lie , “should I?”*

*“HA!” The man bellowed out, “of course you should! Don’t they teach you shit at that idiotic camp?! What the hell kinda clown show is D-bag running there?!”*

*“It’s done.” the same disgruntled voice from before uttered behind the silhouette of the much angrier man.*

*The corners of his dream began to materialize as the image became clear. The static receded, and taking its place, front and center, a man appeared.*

*He was huge. At least seven feet tall and probably just as wide, the man could easily ground Dream to a pulp. His outfit mirrored that sentiment with the black jeans, combat boots, and a red muscle shirt that just shouted, “fuck around and find out”. And if that wasn’t enough, he also sported a large hunting knife strapped to his thigh and a necklace made from a heavy padlock and a thick chain wrapped around his neck. Most startling of all however, were his dark wrap-around sunglasses that glowed red with a menacing aura.*

*“You’re Ares,” Dream said matter-of-factly.*

*“Ya damn right I am!” Ares chuckled, grabbing his knife out of its holster, he proceeded to pick at his nails, “so what gave it away? The chiseled bod? Handsome face? Manly scars-”*

*“Your muscle shirt says ‘Fuck Yeah I Like War!’ around a picture of you naked holding a severed head.”*

*Ares paused, flinging some gunk out of his nails before looking down at his torso, “so you’re saying it’s the bod, then.”*

*“Why the fuck are you even here?”*

*“Oh come on now, the greatest god in the entire pantheon comes to visit you in your dream, taking time out of his precious day to speak to an insignificant little demigod like you and you don’t even cower at my glory?” The god re-holstered his knife and placed his hands at his hips, “Tch, mortals these days have no fucking respect, you know back in my day I used to enter dreams and people would cry and tremble at my feet. HELL, they’d piss their pants at the mere mention of my name. ”*

*Dream rolled his eyes, “I’m not going to cry and tremble before you, much less piss my pants, that’s so lame.”*

*“Crying and trembling before me is NORMAL! I’m the most handsome, most powerful, most loved and most intelligent god in the entire lineup!”*

*Dream snorted, almost choking on the god’s presumptuousness “Tch- yeah right, if YOU’RE the smartest god there is, then I might as well be your fucking son !”*

*Ares went silent and Dream’s laugh quickly transitioned into an awkward chuckle as the God of War was uncharacteristically quiet.*

*“Well it looks like your work here is don-”*

*“SHUT THE FUCK UP YOU QUASIMODO LOOKIN ASS-!”*

*“LISTEN HERE YOU WARMONGERING, HOG-FUCKING, WIFE-STEALING, CITY-SACKING, JAR-FEARING, PARENT-LOATHING, KINSLAYING PIECE OF SHIT!”*

*A second god had entered into view, he was noticeably smaller than Ares but nonetheless stood tall with large muscles and an even wider frame. A large deformed lump sat on his shoulder, making it seem like he was always leaning, and a huge, bulging, misshapen head sat atop his neck, seemingly battling with the lump for the god's center of mass. It was littered with red bumps and covered with welts, as if he'd been bitten by a million bees, and then dragged across gravel for a good quarter mile. His face was no better, it was coated with scars and burns that big bushy eyebrows, and a wild brown beard that sparked small fires every time he talked couldn't even hide. He wore a fading orange jumpsuit, and had one leg in a creaking steel brace.*

*Dream undoubtedly knew him as Sappnap's father, Hephaestus, God of the Forge.*

*“YOU COME TO ME, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FUCKING NIGHT, ASKING- NO! BEGGING ME, TO COME HELP YOU AND CONTACT SOME FUCKING DEMIGOD WHO'S SOMEHOW RELATED TO YOU BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T BE BOTHERED TO KEEP YOUR DISEASE-RIDDEN PRICK INSIDE OF YOUR EDGY ILL-FITTING JEANS FOR ONE FUCKING MINUTE!”*

*Hephaestus' eyes shone with fury as he brought both hands to the sides of his head before he continued ranting. Ares, meanwhile, was starting to hunch more and more as if he somehow wanted to start larping as the hunchback of Notre Dame.*

*“IT'S AMAZING REALLY! HOW I COULD EVEN LET THE PAST FEW CENTURIES- THE PAST FEW MILLENNIA! BE WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE- BUT NO! YOU'RE STILL THE SAME FUCKING ASSHOLE YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN! I MIGHT NOT BE DEMETER, OR EVEN A CACTUS EXPERT FOR THAT MATTER, BUT I KNOW A FUCKING PRICK WHEN I SEE ONE!”*

*The god grabbed a wrench from a nearby toolbox and threw it at some machine out of view. The image began to distort and the sound quality was significantly lowered. A loud humming and erratic whirring could be heard in the background getting progressively louder as the dream progressed.*

*“YOU HAVE FIVE MINUTES UNTIL THIS FUCKER BLOWS — TEN IF YOU'RE LUCKY — AND AFTER THAT, I WANT YOU OUTSIDE OF MY FUCKING HOUSE OR I'LL SHOVE THIS THING SO FAR UP YOUR ASS YOU WON'T BE SHITTING FOR YEARS! I'LL SWEAR IT ON THE RIVER STYX IF I HAVE TO!”*

*Lightning and thunder flashed and crackled around both gods as Hephaestus walked out of view, his exit broadcasted by the loud slamming of a door. Meanwhile, the flames in Ares' eyes died down and the man was still hunched over. Like a dog walking with its tail in between its legs, Ares' approached Dream, the snark and gusto in his voice long gone.*

*“Listen Cream-”*

*“It's Dream!”*

*Ares rolled his eyes, “Yeah, we're in one, I know, but listen. There is a reason I came to you that's*

*not related to-*

*"I'M YOUR FUCKING SON?!"*

*"FUCK no," Ares yelled, regaining his pre-rant attitude, he slammed his hands down on the table before him as he sat down , "Thena is definitely your godly parent, and I'd rather spend a summer in Tartarus than fuck her , but I am your great-great-grandpa so...Surprise!"*

*Dream's eyes, if somehow possible, widened even further , "what the actual FUCK!"*

*"Yeah that's what your mom said when I told her that your granddad was my grandson," the god chuckled, "good times. She's never living that down-"*

*"Why the hell are you telling me this?" Dream cut him off, his hands shaking, "what am I supposed to even do with this information?"*

*"Oh," Ares remarked , "it's because I can't have you embarrassing me, you know?" Once more, he pulled out his knife and drove it right into the table , "you gotta know what kind of legacy you're carrying here! Listen, your new friend? Pussy's son?"*

*"WHOSE SON?!"*

*"You can't let him show you up, okay?" Ares continued, ignoring Dream, "This kid has got crazy fucking water powers! You saw how he took down my favorite son?! It was SO FUCKING EMBARRASSING! The whole pantheon was LAUGHING at me cause of that toddler who took down my pride and joy!" Ares' breathing became labored and erratic, like watching a rabid dog fight for the last morsel of food, "How could he have POSSIBLY FUCKING KNOWN?! Poseidon's kid isn't shit against mine! AND HERMES'S LITTLE BASTARD, UGH, IF I COULD SEND A WILD BOAR AFTER HIS ASS I'D DO IT IN A HEARTBEAT!" The god stood up and yanked his knife out of the table, he picked his nails once more, but he angled the blade slightly towards Dream, "I'm warning you now, Cream, DON'T disappoint me, you already know what he's capable of, okay? MAKE. HIM. YOUR. BITCH."*

*Dream stood — sat? — he didn't know exactly how he was positioned inside his dream, but one thing he knew for sure was that Ares' was a fucking bitch of a sore loser.*

*"How fucking petty are you?!"*

*"EXTREMELY, I'm very pretty, I prefer 'handsome' though, but that has NOTHING to do with this conversation, Cream!" Ares, once again, re-holstered his knife — di immortales, can't this guy make up his mind? — and slammed his hands on the table, " what I'm telling you is pretty simple, okay? This random Katara kinnie already embarrassed me once, if he stole your spotlight on this mission I'd have to leave the pantheon from the shame of it all! I came here to make sure that you know exactly how much is resting on you right now. You're carrying my honor and Thena's honor too, you know how much she can't stand that fish fucker. Don't disappoint us."*

*With that, the god stood up and his face contorted into an intimidating glower. Dream stared back at him in horror, his heart and mind racing, although, it was slightly overshadowed by the loud whirring of the machine, it's humming grew more intense with each passing second.*

*"I'm gonna leave before this thing blows up," the God of War stated, looking at the machine as if it were some kind of beast, "remember now, don't fuck up."*

*With a snap of his fingers , Ares' form poofed out of existence in a cloud of red smoke. The smoke was laid thick but quickly began to dissipate, a man with a filthy rag walked into the room and*

*tinkered with the machine. The whirring grew louder, and Dream heard several small pops, maybe warnings of an incoming explosion, but against all odds the man worked his wonders and the machine grew quiet.*

*Dream shifted uncomfortably and cleared his throat, "So how do I leave?"*

*The man on the screen flinched and turned to look at Dream. As the smoke receded, he recognized the man as Hephaestus, a permanent scowl etched deeply into his face.*

*"Oh," the god mumbled, "I forgot you were still there." he picked himself up and cleaned his face with the oily rag, not caring at all that it actually made him dirtier. "I'm sorry about the whole Ares thing."*

*"It's fine," Dream reassured him, "it didn't look like he ruined your machine that much-"*

*"No," Hephaestus cut him off, "I meant I'm sorry you're related to him, my condolences."*

*Dream stood slack jawed and snickered, sharing a sense of camaraderie with the forge god, "yeah it really sucks."*

*Hephaestus snorted, "it does, but you can't exactly pick who you're related to, right?"*

*"True, I'm surprised you even let him use your machine, to be honest."*

*"Oh-ho TRUST me kid, it didn't come for free," he stuffed the oily rag into his pocket, "a good amount of Ares' war spoils can go a LONG way, even if he is insufferable."*

*Dream chuckled and stared at the god, "you know, even though meeting Ares sucked ass, at least I get to brag to Sapnap that I met his dad before him."*

*"Sapnap? Who's that?" Hephaestus asked, puzzled.*

*Dream wheezed, coughing roughly as the god stared at him blankly, "Oh gods," he quieted down, "you're completely serious, aren't you?"*

*"Duh, why should I know your little mortal friends? I'm not your dad."*

*"But you are HIS dad!"*

*"Oh he's my son?! Ha! I forgot I had those."*

*Dream stared at the man in silent judgement, "You just forgot about all of your kids? Every single one?"*

*"It's nothing personal, they're just not that interesting," he shrugged, "I do feel kind of bad, honestly, I wish I could spend more time with them, but my machines are just much better company than any person could ever be."*

*Dream grimaced at the lame excuse and Hephaestus sighed, "Look, you haven't been alive for as long as I have and you never will be, you can't just go around judging me, you have no idea how awful people really are."*

*"But these are your kids, they're your family!"*

*"Being family means nothing," the god spat, his knuckles whitening as he curled his hands into fists, "I know that more than anyone."*

*Dream faltered, the angry retort lost on his lips as he recalled the cruel ridicule Hephaestus had faced in the hands of his godly family.*

*Hephaestus sighed and relaxed his stance, adjusting the camera in front of him while he was at it, "So which son is it again that's your friend?" he asked, the tension from the previous subject seeming to have dissipated just as quickly as it had come, "I don't really have a lot of time to check and see what each one is doing but if you describe him I might know."*

*"Oh, Sapnap? He's got like dark hair, he's short, he's part Greek-"*

*"You're all part Greek," Hephaestus snorted.*

*"From the mortal side," he rolled his eyes as Hephaestus nodded along, "Uh, what else? He's always wearing this weird bandana around his forehead?"*

*"Oh I know which one that is! The fire one! It's been a while since I had a son like him, I would say he's a good kid but I have no idea."*

*"He is. He's a really good kid," Dream assured him, "but what do you mean by-"*

*A sharp clang rang out from the other side of the screen causing the two to flinch, Hephaestus slowly turned around and groaned.*

*"I have to go take care of that, sorry about Ares, again, it's really just awful," he said, "I'll get out of your dream now but it's gonna wake you up and you won't be able to sleep for the next 48 hours."*

*"WHAT?!"*

*"Yeah, it's still a prototype, you were a pretty good test subject for it," he said hurriedly as he pressed a couple of buttons on the side of the screen, "I just wish you'd talk a little less. Bye."*

*With that the screen turned to static again and Dream's eyes snapped open as he woke up back in his cabin. He sighed and sat up in his bunk staring blankly at the window in front of him as the stars and moon teased him from the other side.*

*"This is bullshit." He flopped back down and screwed his eyes shut, determined to prove Hephaestus wrong.*

*After a persistent three minutes and a minor headache, he groaned and rolled over, gracefully tumbling onto the floor and landing in a pile of dirty laundry from the day before that he had so adamantly refused to wash.*

*To be fair, it had been an incredibly exhausting day, what with that disaster of a Capture the Flag game, and finding out that his teammate was not, in fact, a badass that somehow got the hang of his water powers in a day, but actually a ticking time bomb that could accidentally murder him and Sapnap with a puddle.*

*Of course, the fearsome almost-murderer had decided to pass out and hit his head *again*, before landing directly in Dream's lap, which of course meant that he was tasked with dragging him to the infirmary to get him patched up.*

*Thanks to the all flooding, the hellhound, and just the entire morning in general, nearly all the beds were taken, so George had landed himself a place right next to Technoblade in the infirmary.*

*That'll be a nice surprise for him when he gets up* Dream snickered as he lifted himself up from the pile of dirty laundry.

He peeled a sock off the back of his t-shirt, grimacing as he realized that it definitely stained. He glanced at the clock on the wall above the window as it proudly displayed a time of 3:27 am.

"Are you *kidding me!*"

He flinched quietly as he realized that his entire cabin was still asleep. Glancing hesitantly at the person who bunked above him, he received a nice surprise after a tense minute when they rolled over to flip him the bird.

"Sorry Mega," he whispered, stifling a snort.

The boy sighed and sat up, shooting Dream a dirty look before quickly being replaced by one of confusion.

"Eh," Dream replied quietly, still wary of his sleeping half-siblings, "nothing much really, just the gods being assholes."

Mega nodded in understanding as he pointed to the pile of dirty laundry beneath Dream.

"Yeah, yeah," he grumbled, clambering to his feet, "I'll get it done, it's not like I can sleep anyways."

As Dream collected his belongings from beneath him and out from under their bunk bed, Mega threw down a scarf at his ever growing mound.

"Hey," Dream whisper-shouted, "I am *not* washing your shit for you,"

Mega glared at him, pointing at the wall clock that now read 3:29 am.

"Okay fine" Dream conceded, "but *only* because I woke you up accidentally, it's not gonna happen again."

The boy rolled his eyes and flopped back onto his bed as Dream sighed and gathered the rest of his pile of dirty clothes, resigning himself to a night of no sleep and mind-numbing laundry.

## Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! If you're liking this au make sure to check out our Tommyinnit oneshot series that follows the adventures of Tommy and the rest of the crew back home! It updates on Thursdays, and is the second work in the series, hope you enjoy it!

# Wards, Boars, and Swords || George

## Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Before we start off here, we'd like to apologize for the heavy delay on this chapter. Due to school starting for our authors and editors we had to take a week off of updating so that we can all have a smooth transition into this school year. This new change in all of our schedules is also the reason we will be switching our upload day from Friday to Sunday!

Thank you all for your support and for sticking by us throughout this wait! As promised, this update is nice and chunky to make up for it!

The scent of disinfectant pierced George's nostrils, tugging him violently out of his dreamless sleep. He groaned at the odor, scratching the bottom of his nose in an attempt to get rid of it.

*Ugh, this place smells disgusting where the hell did I wake up this time?*

Honestly, he had had just about enough of waking up in random places over the past few days. To be fair though, this place *couldn't* be worse than that one time he woke up in the arms of a kidnapper. Or that other time when he woke up in bed with that same kidnapper. Or— come to think of it, too many of these random awakenings involved kidnappers.

He cracked his eyes open slowly, and was instantly blinded by all the white that surrounded him. Everything from the wrinkly white bed sheets, to the long white curtains, and even the patchy white ceiling made his eyes wince in discomfort. Any idiot with a couple of brain cells could tell what the sterile environment was, but in case anyone was *lacking* then the giant sign proclaiming the room as “The Infirmary” definitely did the trick.

He sat up in his bed, muted conversations spiraling around him as people bustled back and forth across the room, none paying any particular attention to him. He yawned and stretched, gradually becoming acquainted with his new location as he scratched his head. The sound of rustling sheets coming from beside him caught his attention and he blinked blearily as he turned towards the source of the noise, freezing when his vision focused on a familiar pair of shining, onyx eyes.

“Congratulations,” Techno rasped from the bed beside him, “you’re finally awake.” The son of Ares gave George the smallest of smiles as he readjusted his position on the hospital bed.

George’s eyes snapped open as the realization of who he had woken up next to shocked him into high alert. Slowly, almost methodically, he faced forward again and fell back onto the mattress, pulling the blanket over his head and praying that he’d disappear off the face of the Earth. Or even wake up in the arms of his asshole kidnapper again. Anything would be better than the son of a war god he almost murdered.

“You know,” Techno continued as he stared at the ceiling, blissfully unaware of George’s state, “I’m surprised that after everything you went through yesterday the thing that ended up getting you was almost eating lunch.” He chuckled, “Like, raisin’ an entire creek? Psh, child’s play. Drownin’ three legendary warriors by accident? What, you *don’t* do that on the daily? But eating lunch? Nah man, that’s where I draw the line. I’m gonna pass out now.”

Techno's laughter slowly died down as he noticed that George was doing a lot less laughing and a lot more cowering under the covers. He sighed, recognizing that, yet again, his father's gift of a 'violent aura' was targeting *another* victim that he didn't want to frighten at *all*.

"Listen man," he tried again, trying to soften his deep voice in hopes that it would sound less murderous to the other demigod, "I promise I'm not mad at you."

George willed his shoulders to stop trembling, but the attempts were futile, his body seemingly working against him as it allowed a muffled plea of, "I-it was an accident, I swear! Please don't kill me!" to tear out of his throat.

*What the fuck is wrong with me?!*

Techno huffed, silently cursing his father and throwing his hands up in frustration before wincing as his injuries protested against the sudden movement, "don't worry about it, I know it was an accident," he said delicately as he readjusted his bandages, "I promise, I'm really not plannin' on killin' you, and even if I *was* I probably couldn't," he tapped the wrappings around his waist, "my ribs are still busted and there's a cup of water, like, right there. You have the advantage."

George attempted to let out a chuckle at the joke, but his body refused, instead trying to unsuccessfully drown itself further under the covers. Techno grimaced and turned back towards the ceiling, sitting in silence with the trembling man as he tried to come up with anything that could console him. He hesitantly opened his mouth to try to salvage the conversation one last time but was saved from the awkward social experience as a familiar irritating voice cut him off.

"Technoblade! I brought you breakfast because I am VERY thoughtful and NOT because Philza and Wilbur said I need to apologize to you! There's nothing to apologize FOR, anyways, in fact *you* should be THANKING me because the line was *very* long."

As soon as the whines reached his ears, the spell seemed to break, leaving George with a lot less fear and a lot more irritation. Like a groundhog at the beginning of February, he peeked his head out from under the covers, glaring at the little blonde bastard who was too busy being louder than a commercial aircraft to notice anyone other than himself and the bedridden son of Ares.

"Wow Tommy," Techno deadpanned, not even bothering to look at the self absorbed gremlin, "thanks for bringing me food that I would've eventually gotten either way. That TOTALLY makes up for almost causing my death," rolling his eyes, he turned to George with a silent question of *Can you believe this guy?*

Their lack of patience for the son of Hermes sent both men into a moment of spontaneous solidarity as George snorted in response, *I know right?!*

"THAT WASN'T ME!" Tommy cried, slamming the tray onto a bedside table, "THAT WAS GEORGE! I can't fucking **raise the ocean** *can I?* That's STUPID! It's a STUPID POWER for **idiots** that are *bad* at everything else! I am a MAN! I don't *need* powers I can't control in order to win against **you!**"

Techno sighed, wishing his violent aura would actually work on the people he wanted it to, "Tommy," he began calmly, "George wouldn't have **raised** the ocean if you didn't **lie** to him!"

"I NEVER LIE!" Tommy cried in defiance, throwing his hands in the air, "You know, everyone calls me TommyTrusty for a *reason* they KNOW I'm always honest! When have I *ever* lied to you, Technoblade, tell me."



“Alphabetically or chrono-?”

“We’ve JUST met *yesterday* and you’ve already lied to me TWICE!” George shrieked, throwing the rest of the covers off of him as his patience hit its limit.

“ZEUS’ FLYING UNDERPANTS!” Tommy screeched, jumping a mile high as a nurse behind him maneuvered to dodge the leaping child, “When the FUCK did *you* get here?!”

“He’s been here since *yesterday*,” Techno remarked, “we’re basically *best friends* at this point, we’ve really bonded during our respective pain induced comas.”

“Wh—! Oh NOW look who’s *lying* TechnoBITCH! Your weird *battle aura* is making him practically *shit himself* around you! And you can’t even *MOVE*!”

Technoblade rolled his eyes, “Tommy, just because you *were* and *are* easily intimidated by me doesn’t mean everyone is.”

“OH is that— is that why you have *soooo* many friends then?”

“Tommy, *this* is why you have *zero*.”

George really wished he had his phone on him at that moment to capture Tommy’s ensuing expression of complete and total offense.

“I *beg* your pardon?! Do you KNOW how many friends I have?! I have SO MANY friends! In fact — in FACT *EVERYONE* in here is my friend—!”

“THAT’S NOT TRUE!” somebody called from the other end of the room, interrupting Tommy’s spiel.

“OH *YOU* SHUT THE FUCK UP! NOBODY WAS TALKING TO *YOU YOU BITCH*! YOU SLIMY PIECE OF *SUSHI*! I’LL—!”

As Tommy stormed off towards the guy who called him out, amping up the volume of his rant with every step forward, George turned and glanced at Techno, the man somehow still managing to look the part of a fearsome warrior as he struggled to sit up on his own.

“Good Mornin’ Techno!” A new, much less irritating voice greeted the son of Ares from the entrance of the infirmary, “Who’s Tommy yelling at this time and why?”

George and Techno turned to look at the newcomer before them. He was a tall, lean man with light skin and blue eyes. His hair was messy and a pale light-blond which he covered with a dark gray and white striped bucket hat. The hat was arranged in such a way that strands of hair framed the sides of the face and hung between his eyes. His attire consisted of a long black kimono over the *classic* piss-yellow Camp Half-Blood t-shirt atop a pair of light grey pants that purposely matched with his light grey accented wooden sandals.

“C'mon Phil, does Tommy really need a reason to be screamin’ at anyone?” Techno snickered.

“Mmm no, but what was it anyway?” Phil chuckled as he helped Techno into a more comfortable seating position, wary of the other man’s injuries.

“It’s a long story, maybe I’ll tell you some other time, when we all meet up to make fun of— uh, I mean, to *talk* about Tommy’s unfortunate adventures, but right now he’s yellin’ at Squid Kid so at least you know it’s funnier than usual.”

"Oh yeah, at *those* weekly meetings," Philza snickered, "Did he at least bring you breakfast like we told him to?"

"Yeah, it's right there," Techno remarked as he gestured towards his bedside table and winced in pain.

"Hey, woah now," Phil cautioned, "I'll bring it to ya, no need to hurt yourself," he patted Techno's shoulder and grabbed the tray, "When's the next time you can have ambrosia?" He asked as he placed the food on Techno's lap, who nodded in thanks.

"Sophie gave me some this morning so not too soon. George could probably use some before he heads out though," Technoblade jerked his head in George's direction, the son of Poseidon freezing like a deer in headlights as the gaze of both men landed on him.

"Oh, hey!" Philza exclaimed, offering his hand out to George, "I hardly noticed ya there, I'm Philza, how're you feeling?"

George accepted the handshake with a grin, the newcomer's calming presence easing most of leftover tension from the son of Ares beside him, though he still avoided looking directly at him, "I'm doing pretty okay, I think," he replied with a scratch to the head, hardly noticing Techno's wide-eyed opened-mouthed look of horror as he stared at the contents of his plate, "I guess taking a nap after bonking my head on the dining table really helped me out."

Philza smiled and sat down on Techno's bed, making room for himself at the far end of it as he pushed aside Techno's legs, making sure to not disturb the stunned son of Ares for fear of further injuring him.

"That makes sense," he chuckled once adjusted and turned back to George, "they couldn't exactly give ya any ambrosia when you were passed out so if you had some right now you'd most likely be set for your quest-!"

"Phil," Techno choked out, cutting Philza off and giving the man at the end of the bed a soft kick, "I can't *eat* this," He gestured at the contents of his plate before tearing his eyes away in disgust, "What the *hell*?!"

"Oh *no*," Philza gasped, wondering whether Tommy finally had the guts, or rather grand delusion, to tamper with Techno's breakfast, "what'd Tommy do?!"

"Phil it's **bacon**! I can't *eat* this!" Philza's worried demeanor cracked as he tried to stifle a snicker, "It's not FUNNY!" Techno cried in distress and the man beside him burst into a fit of laughter, "THESE ARE MY *BROTHERS*!" he wailed, "NOOOOO!"

"Techno you need to eat," Phil managed to utter in between chuckles, patting him on the leg, "you need the energy!"

"Are you kiddin' me?!" Techno pushed the tray of food away in disgust, "I'm *not* gonna eat this! TOMMY!" he shouted towards the opposite end of the infirmary, "What the hell is *wrong* with you?!"

Tommy swiveled around to face the shouting Techno as a camper with dark blue hair and a wrinkly gray tuxedo in front of him released a sigh of relief and quickly shuffled away.

WHAT?!" He shouted back, clearly miffed at having been cut off mid-rant and frowning as he noticed that his victim had escaped. He trudged over to the group, but not before flipping the retreating camper the bird, "What's wrong with the food I went out and stood in a line for HOURS

to get for you?!" He huffed, approaching the son of Ares with his arms crossed and his brows down turned in an ugly scowl.

"You didn't wait in line at all," Philza chuckled, as Tommy kicked the legs of Techno's bed frame, "you just kept yelling that the food was for Techno over and over again while you cut everyone,"

"Wh—! *NO I DID—!* "

"Tommy why on *earth* would you bring me BACON!"

"Why what's wrong with— OH." Tommy's eyes widened in realization and he chuckled sheepishly, "Listen, Techno, can't you make an exception just *once* ?"

"Tommy," Techno stressed, glancing at a still-laughing Philza and recently-stupefied George for support, "you're asking me to excuse *cannibalism*!" He exclaimed as Phil's laughter grew louder and more persistent, "Well *sorry*, but *no*, I can't excuse *cannibalism*. Not even once." He stared at the strips of bacon remorsefully, now cold and lying in a puddle of coagulated fat. He shifted the plate towards Tommy so the boy could observe the damage, "Look at them Tommy, they're *dead* ."

"Oh COME *ON!*" Tommy screeched, "YOU WEREN'T EVEN A PIG FOR *THAT* LONG! It was like *one* quest, wasn't it!? Even THEN it was only for **FIVE MINUTES!** AND YOU HAD TO KILL THAT MASSIVE PIG THERE **ANYWAYS!** JUST GET OVER IT AND EAT THE BACON!"

"THAT PIG WAS SEXIST, HE DOESN'T COUNT!" Techno yelled, slamming his fist in the tray, "I'M NOT EATING THE BACON!"

"FINE THEN *I'LL* EAT THE BACON!" Tommy declared, reaching over and grabbing a fistful of the meat off his plate.

Techno gasped, "Tommy, don't you *dare* ." He warned, and even though the ensuing glare wasn't directed at him, George could feel a shiver running down his spine.

Tommy smirked and stuck his tongue out before shoving the entire fistful into his mouth, scandalized gasps and shrieks erupted from the bedridden man as he witnessed the consumption of his brethren.

"Look away, Techno!" Phil managed to utter through his fits of laughter as he covered Techno's eyes with his hands.

"MY BROTHERS!"

"THEY'RE DELICIOUS!" Tommy shouted as morsels of food fell out of his mouth, "REALLY HITS THE SPOT!"

"Don't talk with your mouth full." Philza chided.

As Tommy made a second lunge towards the plate, Techno threw himself over it to shield his 'brothers', pleading with the bloodthirsty child to spare them. Phil chuckled and shook his head, leaving the two to their argument as he ducked under a flying piece of bacon and walked around to George's beside.

"*You* still need that ambrosia, dontcha?" he asked, pointing at George with one hand as he grabbed a small, wax wrapped object from the bedside table with the other.

"Uh, yeah," George replied, tearing his eyes away from the scuffle and focusing on the item in Philza's hand, "what *is* that exactly?"

"It's ambrosia, food of the gods." He peeled away the wax paper wrappings to reveal what could only be described as a cube of gold, shining with a coat of thick, sticky glaze as small specks of sugar twinkled from inside of it.

George's eyes widened, "That's supposed to make me feel *better*? It looks like it'll give me a *cavity*, what does it taste like?"

"Oh it's different for everyone!" he motioned for George's hand as he placed the cube in the center of his palm, "It depends on what your favorite food is, it could taste like chocolate or it could taste like beef stew, it's up to you."

George looked at the little square of ambrosia hesitantly before shrugging and downing the entire treat in one bite. Instantly, a gentle warmth began spreading throughout his body as his taste buds erupted with joy. He could feel his mom's home cooking, several dishes in fact, dance around his mouth as the memories began to flood in. English breakfast on a Sunday morning, Beef Wellington for his birthday, and most precious of all, the sweet toffee pudding his mother used to make every Christmas.

As the warmth spread throughout his body, he couldn't help but want some more, to feel the presence of his mother and the memories that came with her.

"Can I have another one?" He asked Philza, as the warmth, although still welcome, now became slightly uncomfortable as beads of sweat began to dot his forehead, "I think I might need some ice water too, it's getting a bit hot in here for my taste."

"That's the ambrosia, mate," Philza remarked as he set a glass of apple juice onto George's bedside, "eat too much and the stuff'll burn ya from the inside out."

"WHAT?!"

"Oh did I forget to tell ya?" Philza sat down at the end of George's bed and pointed towards the glass of juice, "It'll make ya feel like you're burnin' alive, and truth be told, if you were completely mortal it *actually* would!"

"HOW DID YOU FORGET TO MENTION THAT?!" George screamed, reaching for the glass of apple juice and drank it all in one gulp.

"Wait no—! Ah now you've gone and done it." Philza grimaced, glancing at George's face as it contorted into a horrified expression.

"WHAT DID YOU PUT IN THAT APPLE JUICE?!" He screeched, scratching at his throat in an attempt to rip the sensation of swallowing hell out of it.

"Oh that ain't apple juice," Philza shook his head pitifully as George gasped for air, "That was nectar, it's the drink version of ambrosia."

"OH MY GOD!"

"Next time wait a moment, yeah?" He chuckled, patting George's shoulder while the demigod tried to cough up a fireball.

As the sensation of gargling lava began to subside, George felt something inside of him snap. Like

a dam bursting and releasing its water from behind, he felt a wave of vitality wash over him. His arms and legs, sore from Capture the Flag, now felt restored and spring-like. His head, afflicted with dull aches from yesterday's corner side smackdown, now felt fine, exceptional even, as the pain faded away into nothingness. When the heat had finally dissipated entirely, he felt his body become lightweight, even more so than a feather, and a new form of energy entered into his bones.

"You feelin' alright there?" Philza asked the son of Poseidon with a nervous laugh, as he noticed the change in his expression, "Don't die on me here, alright? Next time try taking sips of—"

"I feel like I could punch an ELEPHANT!" George declared, his eye twitching manically as Philza quickly pulled his hands away from the crazed demigods back.

"And *I* feel like I could punch Tommy if he doesn't leave the BACON *ALONE* !"

George snapped out of the godly high, both he and Philza turning to witness the smackdown that Techno was about to bring onto Tommy.

"They're already *dead* TECHNO BITCH ! JUST let me EAT them! Honestly, you're worse than TUBBO with his *stupid* bees!"

"Both bees and pigs offer a *significantly* greater service to the planet than you do."

"OH—!"

"Hey guys what's up?" Another voice piped up from behind George, the unanticipated presence of another camper making him flinch and shoot out his fist in its direction.

"Ow! George what the *heck*! " The son of Hephaestus groaned, rubbing at his shoulder.

"Don't *scare* me like that!"

"I didn't *mean* to, you should've been paying attention!" Sappnap hissed, glancing at his injured arm, "Sorry it took us so long to come get you, Dream here was taking *forever* getting all prettied up." He jerked his head in the other man's direction.

George glanced at Dream, who was standing behind Sappnap with his arms folded over his chest.

George snickered and turned to Sappnap, "looks like it didn't work."

Sappnap gave a scandalized gasp as he covered Dream's ears, " *George!* Don't listen to him Dream, *I* think you're the prettiest."

"Ugh, can you guys *please* stop flirting in public?!" Tommy shouted, he stuck his tongue out and feigned a gagging motion.

"Yeah," Techno joined in, "there's an innocent little *child* here."

"Oh *WOW*!" Tommy cried, "YOU'RE SO *FUNNY* TECHNOBLADE! HAHA CHILD? HAHA FUNNY? TOMMYINNIT IS A KID? ISN'T IT BEDTIME? GO TO SCHOOL? I'VE NEVER HEARD *THAT* ONE BEFORE!"

As he ranted on, the undefended plate in front of Techno caught his eye. A shit eating grin spread over his face as he realized that this was his chance and he lunged forward, shoving another fistful of bacon into his mouth with a triumphant cry.

"NOOOO!" Techno wailed, throwing himself forward in an attempt to throttle the boy who was

pointing and laughing at him, though the laughter was cut short as he choked on a piece of bacon and doubled over, hacking painfully onto the ground in order to dislodge Techno's brethren from his windpipe.

"Yes! My brothers! Avenge yourselves!" Techno cheered as Tommy gasped for air.

"Oh *gods*," Philza wheezed and wiped a tear from his eye, turning back to the trio, "I'll take care of those two, you guys can go on ahead." he waved them off as he walked over to Tommy and prepared to perform the Heimlich maneuver on him, "Good luck on your quest!"

"Thanks!" Sapnap grinned as he dragged a deeply concerned George off his bed and tugged him and Dream out of the infirmary, nearly taking down one of the bustling nurses on their way.

"Sapnap watch where you're going!" Dream exclaimed, pulling his arm out of the other demigods grasp as the door to the infirmary swung closed behind them.

"What?! I said I'm *sorry*, okay? He was *fine*!" Sapnap retorted, releasing his grip on George's wrist.

"He was probably carrying a bunch of medicine to save the life of somebody sick and dying and you almost made him drop it," Dream snickered, leading the trio down a hallway that George recognized as the inside of the big house.

"Where are we going now? Don't we have to leave for the quest or something?" He asked, cutting off their incessant back and forth.

Sapnap looked George up and down and snorted, "Do you seriously wanna head off on a quest to the *underworld* without a weapon?"

"Yeah, what are you gonna do, scream at the monsters? Pass out on them? Hey Sapnap, maybe if we *sweat* hard enough he could use it to drown them!" Dream wheezed.

"You guys are *so rude*," George huffed.

"We're just *kidding*, jeez," Sapnap rolled his eyes, "we're gonna stop by at the office to pick up some MetroCards and then head off to the forge to get *you* equipped with something other than Dream's tears."

"Metro cards? What, is there a public bus that takes us right to the gates of hell?"

"No, you need to take a *train* to get to Jersey," Dream chuckled at his own joke, "We need the metros to get to Central Park, that's where the entrance to the underworld is."

"You're *joking*," George snorted, "What, is there just a hole in the ground that you jump into and suddenly you're chilling with all the dead people?"

"It's a *little* bit more complicated than that, but basically, yeah." Dream nodded.

George stared blankly at the other man before shrugging. Hey, it's not the craziest thing he's heard so far. If Greek gods and monsters like to hang out in Manhattan then why *shouldn't* the dead have Central Park?

The three demigods stepped into the office and Mr. D looked up from his newspaper, grumbling in disinterest as he realized who they were.

“Eh, what do you brats want from me now?” he sneered, taking a sip of his diet coke.

“We need MetroCards for our quest, where’s Chiron?” Dream asked.

“Out. He told me he left them for you in his drawer over there,” he jerked his head in the direction of a table, piled high with all sorts of papers and documents and empty cans that definitely didn’t appear to belong to Chiron.

Dream huffed and walked over towards the desk, sifting through the papers to try to find their ticket to freedom.

Mr. D turned away from Dream’s figure, glancing over at George with a grimace, “You’re going on a quest looking like *that*?”

“What do you mean?” George asked, glancing down at his yellow camp tee.

“You look like a *disaster* kid, your outfit is an absolute atrocity!”

“You tell ‘im Mr. D,” Sappnap chuckled, nodding in agreement.

“Shut up Tramp Stamp, you’re on thin fucking ice here too!” Mr. D glared at him, “Just because you’re the best dressed out of you three doesn’t mean that’s good. *Stevie Wonder* could dress himself better than you brats ever could!”

“That’s not fair! Stevie Wonder is a millionaire!” Sappnap whined, “He can afford nice things! All *we* get here are scraps from cabin ten and these gross shirts that make it look like we tell planes where to land when it’s dark!”.

“Eh I *hate* it when one of you whiny fucks makes a good point,” Mr. D grumbled, sipping at his soda, “They should exile ‘Dite here for a little bit, maybe *she* can get everyone here to start looking near decent. Half the kids here think wearing a suit is normal everyday attire! It’s a tragedy I tell ya.” He sighed.

“You’re literally wearing a leopard print shirt and striped shorts,” George muttered under his breath.

“My awful fashion choices are on *purpose* because I know Apollo is watching me and that it’s pissing him off,” he belched and wiped his mouth on his arm, “*Yours* however, are awful *mistakes*, just like you.”

“Okay well there’s nothing I can really *do* about it now, is there?” George narrowed his eyes at the god, who shrugged in response.

“Sure there is, go find something better in the lost and found box,” He kicked a cardboard box out from underneath the table and it slid over to George’s feet.

“I am *not* going to look through other people’s *garbage* just because you don’t like my outfit,” George grimaced.

“Well you’re going to need to change *anyways* since we’re not allowed to wear camp tees on quests, they’re too much of a target for monsters and mortal people start asking questions about how to sign up and stuff,” Sappnap explained, bending down to rifle through the box’s contents, “Oh what about this!” He exclaimed, holding up a tie dye shirt with tears on the hem.

“Sappnap I can’t even see all the colors on that and I know it’s ugly.”

Mr. D snorted and took another sip of his drink while Sapnap shrugged and threw the shirt back in, continuing his search. As the different objects were shuffled around the box, George's eye caught onto something blue, peeking out from against the grey and yellow tones.

"Wait, what's that?" He asked, bending over and smacking Sapnap's hands away so as to not lose sight of the object.

"Ow! Just ask me to move next time you *jerk!*"

George ignored Sapnap's cries in favor of staring at the blue shirt he had pulled out of the lost and found box, the previous owner having slapped on a fake supreme sticker to the front, but other than that it appeared to be in perfect condition.

"Hey, that's not a bad find!" Mr. D remarked, raising an impressed brow at the shirt, "Nice blue, in case you were wondering, not purple."

"How did you—?"

"God stuff, don't piss me off with your questions."

George's jaw snapped shut and he stared back at his discovery, "Can I *really* take it?"

"Sure can, *I'm* not gonna stop you and lost and found is just another word for 'free shit', right?" Mr. D shrugged, throwing the now empty soda can over his shoulder, "Finders keepers, losers weepers or whatever it is you brats say."

"Huh, okay then," George muttered, "I guess this is mine then."

"Congrats, brat."

"Go try it on!" Sapnap exclaimed.

"I *am*," George responded as he wrestled out of the camp tee and threw it in Sapnap's face, tugging the new shirt over his head and sliding his arms through the sleeves.

Sapnap whistled appreciatively, "Wow George you clean up *nice*."

"Blue is *definitely* your color, kid, stick to that." Mr. D nodded, quickly cracking open a new can of soda and gulping it down to mask the almost-compliment.

"Dream, come tell George how pretty he looks with his new shirt!" Sapnap called to the demigod drowning in stacks of paperwork.

"I'm a *little* bit busy here!" Dream grumbled from underneath the pile.

"Oh shit, you're still looking for those metros, eh?" Mr. D snickered, "Whoops, turns out Chiron actually gave them to me *personally* to hold onto, they were right here in my pocket the whole time!" He pulled three metrocards out of the breast pocket of his Hawaiin shirt and chucked them onto the table in front of him.

"Are you fucking *serious?!'*" Dream growled, slipping over random forms as he stumbled towards the table, slamming his hands on top the three yellow cards.

"Yup." Mr. D smirked, "People make mistakes, D'Arby, nobody's perfect."

Dream glared at the god, "Do you *know* how many paper cuts I have right now?" He hissed.



“Nah, and I don’t really give a shit,” his fingers hovered over the rim of his coke can, “Now get outta my office before I remove you myself, you’re givin’ me a fuckin headache.”

With the MetroCards secured and George’s wardrobe refreshed, the group exited the big house, following Sapnap as he led them towards the forge.

“You’re gonna love it there George, trust me,” Sapnap patted him on the shoulder, “it’s the best place in this whole camp! After the mess hall, of course.”

“Right, of course,” George snorted.

Sapnap continued waxing lyrical about the forge to him as they walked towards it, only pausing when a large, circular building, with several smokestacks jutting from the roof, came into view.

“Here it is!” Sapnap cried, running towards the building and throwing open the front doors, “Welcome to the forge, George!” the son of Hephaestus announced, causing several heads to swivel in their direction as he gestured at the bustling workspace.

“How long were you holding onto that rhyme for,” Dream snickered, walking in behind them and sitting at an empty workbench

“What are you talking about? I *just* came up with it, I totally wasn’t waiting to say it since I met him.” he replied, dropping his arms to his side.

“Pff— yeah right.” Dream nodded, rolling his eyes.

“Don’t listen to him, George,” Sapnap whispered, leading George away from Dream as he shot him a glare, “he’s just jealous he can’t come up with these things as well as I can.”

“Sapnap, if Apollo could hear half the things you say he’d cry,”

“Yeah! Out of *jealousy* !” he retorted, “We’re not here to talk about my epic rapping abilities though, I could serenade you with a rap while we’re on the road, we’re *actually* here to pick up a weapon that you can’t hurt yourself with.”

“I’m not *that* bad,” George muttered.

“Yes you are,” Sapnap replied without missing a beat, “but my buddy Fred heard about your whole ‘water plus no skills’ problem and wanted to try making a weapon that could work for you so let’s see what he got for us.”

Sapnap walked over to the far corner of the forge where two people were sitting side by side, hunched over some strange boxy contraption.

“Hey *Fred*,” Sapnap grinned, throwing his arm over the shoulders of one of them, “We’re here to pick up that weapon you were talking about!”

“Call me Fred one more time and we’re gonna have some problems.” the man grumbled, pushing Sapnap off of him, “Did you seriously tell the new guy that my name is Fred?!”

“Well you do *look* like a Fred,” George muttered under his breath.

“HA! SEE? YOU TOTALLY LOOK LIKE A FRED!”

“I DO *NOT* LOOK LIKE A FRED! My name is PUNZ, okay? With a ‘z’ at the end.”

“Yeah, not to be confused with his *identical twin brother* , Ponk.” Sapnap snickered, earning him a glare from Punz.

“I’m not giving you the sword,” he declared, turning back to his contraption, “Tubbo hand me that screw—”

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry, okay, your name is Punz and you are not the same as Ponk at all, you’re very smart and talented it must’ve been very complicated to make a sword for a trash fighter like George here, especially when you’re not even a weapon smith! Can we *please* have it?”

George didn’t even bother to act offended at the remark.

“*Fine* ,” Punz grumbled, suppressing a pleased smile at the compliment, “I didn’t actually need to do a lot of weapon-smithing for it, the naiads helped me with this one.” He said, pulling the working goggles up to his forehead and removing the dirty gloves from his hands.

“What are naiads?” George asked as Punz fiddled with a combination lock on the giant storage closet beside his work bench.

“They’re a type of nature spirit that deal with water, they’re kinda pissed at you for yesterday by the way,” Punz replied as the lock popped open, “they’ll forgive you soon enough though cuz they all wanna fuck your dad, so don’t worry about it.” He tossed the lock onto the table and dove into the first shelf, pushing aside random weapons and armor pieces as he continued talking, “Also they basically hate *everyone* so even if you didn’t ruin their home they wouldn’t have liked you that much.”

“Yeah, only Demeter kids get to talk to the nymphs like normal people, the lucky bastards,” Sapnap sighed mournfully, leaning against the closet.

“Hell yeah we are, cry about it *Snapmap* ,” Punz chuckled, throwing a spear over his shoulder and narrowly missing Sapnap.

“Hey! If I stopped with the ‘Fred’ you gotta say my name right too!” Sapnap exclaimed, “AND WATCH WHERE YOU’RE THROWING THESE THINGS!” he added as a shield almost hit his arm.

“I *am*,” Punz snickered, crawling out of the closet with a long case in hand, “now clean up this mess while I show George his cool new weapon.”

“I am *not* cleaning up *your* mess, what am I your *mother*? ”

“My mother would choke me with a leaf if I ever asked her to clean up after me so *no* , you’re just some guy who’s gonna do it because I’m helping out your friend.”

“George, we’re not friends anymore,” Sapnap grumbled as he began kicking the equipment back into the storage closet.

Punz grinned and gestured for George to join him at the far end of the workbench, away from the other camper who was still hard at work over the weird, rectangular, striped machine. He slammed the case down on the table and flicked open the clasps, slowly lifting the lid as a cool fog poured out from underneath it. George felt somebody come up behind him, peering over his shoulder at the dramatic unveiling of his weapon, but he ignored it in favor of staring at the spectacle himself.

The weapon was clear, clearer than any glass or crystal George had ever seen, and it was adorned with intricate swirls that resembled a churning ocean. Its hilt seemed to be made out of gold and

wrapped tightly by smooth black leather. Taking a closer look at the hilt, towards the base of the sword, George could make out a faint inscription. *Nilas*, George translated, surprised that Ancient Greek came so easily to him. He wondered who would write *sea ice* on his sword when it occurred to him that it was definitely the naiads, most likely trying to butter him up so he could introduce his father, Poseidon, to them.

*Nice try, but I didn't get to meet him yet either so we're all stuck*, he chuckled quietly to himself.

Looking over the sword once more, he came to notice a sea star engraved into the pommel, it had seven arms, all of them outstretched and joining hands, *fins?*, with the other star on the reverse side. All in all, it was a beauty of a sword.

"Wow..." Dream whispered from behind him, and George couldn't help but nod in agreement.

"You wanna give it a test drive?" Punz asked, lifting the sword by its hilt and spinning it around a couple of times.

"Fuck yeah, that's so cool!" he cried, making a grabbing motion for the weapon.

"Alright just be careful where you swing it, try it on the test dummy over there," he nodded towards a group of dummies behind them, each with a varying range of slashes, stab wounds and tears shown on them, "the red one's for swords."

"Pff, which one's *that*?" He asked, glancing at the monochrome selection of mannequins.

"*Red* George, do you not know your colors?" Dream snorted, "It's basic kindergarten stuff."

"Well not if your *colorblind*, asshole." he rolled his eyes.

"Oh *shit*, seriously?" Dream grimaced, his tone almost sounding apologetic, "I-I didn't know—"

"*Obviously* you didn't know," George huffed, "just tell me which one it is."

"Wait, what colors can't you see?" Punz asked, not minding his own business.

"Well, reds and greens mostly," he sighed, twirling the sword around anxiously, "basically anything that isn't blue or grey or black or yellow—"

"LIKE A BEE!" exclaimed the camper at the other end of the table, leaping to his feet as his screwdriver clattered to the ground, "Sorry, oh my gods I *love* bees! You know yesterday when Tommy and I were being chased by that dog in the forest he threw a *beehive* at it?!"

"That's... bad." George remarked, shooting Dream a questioning look.

"It IS!" He exclaimed, "Now their home is destroyed and the queen is injured and we don't think she's gonna make it! Don't worry though, Punz and I have been working on a machine to save the hive, would you like to see it? It's going to be a mobile hive shaped like a big bee so that it can follow me around and *I* can be their new queen! Isn't that cool? Come, i'll show you."

"I just want to know which one of the dummy's is red," George responded, scratching the back of his neck, "Can the bees help me see color?"

"Wait, you're *colorblind* ?!" he exclaimed.

"Tubbo that's what we've been talking about this *whole time* ," Dream snickered, "Why do you think we mentioned black and yellow?"

“Because of the *bees*, obviously,” Tubbo rolled his eyes, before turning back to George, “So you can only see black and yellow?”

“Well, not only, I also see blue and white— Why does it matter?”

Tubbo gasped, “Aww that’s AMAZING!”

"It is?" George raised his eyebrow.

"Yes! Hold on, I have the perfect solution.”

“You do?” Dream asked.

“Sapnap wait don’t lock it, I have something in there!” Tubbo called before Sapnap could close the closet door, “Yes, it’s on the top shelf, you can probably reach it, Dream.”

“Uh, sure, what does it look like?” He stood on his tip toes and peered over the top shelf.

“It’s in a glasses case thing but bigger, it should be somewhere back there,” He responded before turning to George excitedly, “I saw one of these glasses for colorblind people on the internet back at home and I wanted to try to replicate them at camp, but after I finally finished them I realized that I have nobody to give them to so they were just sitting there for a long time. Did you know that your red green colorblindness is the most common out of all types? I figured if I should be making it for any kind it should be the most common one so you’re pretty lucky. Did you find it yet?”

“Is it this thing?” Dream asked, pulling out a case and waving it above his head.

“Yes! That’s it!” Tubbo exclaimed, catching the box as Dream threw it towards him.

He opened the case and pulled out a pair of what looked like thick welding goggles. They were white with black lenses, much cleaner than how George had envisioned them considering the fact that they were sitting at the back of a storage closet, but they were also littered with little golden valves and switches around the rim. If he had to describe them in as few words as possible, he’d most likely call them 'monochrome steampunk'.

"They're huge!" he exclaimed, inspecting the goggles for any other detail he might’ve missed, “how am I supposed to put these on my head?”

"Well they're big because I got too excited to try recreating the feature that I just used an old pair of multifunction goggles." Tubbo shrugged, twirling the goggles around his finger, "Also I already *told* you I didn't know anyone with colorblindness to actually test it so I couldn't improve the size and make a new pair afterwards. They won't fall off though since they were originally meant for use inside machines or on stealth missions so they have adjustable straps on the side to *really* stick to your head. Here, try them on!" He launched the goggles off his finger in George's direction, causing the demigod to drop his weapon and fumble to catch it.

"George, your foot!" Dream yelled, his hand darting out as the sword landed point first on top of the other demigod's foot.

George let out a deafening shriek and dropped the goggles just as the tip of the sword made contact with him, immediately losing its shape and dripping off his shoe before clattering onto the floor harmlessly as it once again retained its figure.

Punz let out a sigh of relief, rubbing his ear painfully, “Well at least we know *that* works now, can’t say the same for my ears though.” He grumbled.

Tubbo nodded in agreement, “Everything here is very fragile, you should not scream like that, for it can result in a fatality.”

“BS, I know for a fact that Tommy hangs out here all the time,” Dream snorted, reaching for the blade on the ground just as George went for it, resulting in them banging their heads together.

“Ow! That’s *my* sword!” George yelled, snatching the weapon as he rubbed his skull.

“I *know* I was going to give it to you, relax!”

“Just put on the goggles, try out the sword, and let’s *go* already! You guys can argue on the way there!” Sapnap cried, rolling his eyes impatiently.

“*Fine*,” George huffed, glaring at Dream one more time before he grabbed the goggles and held the sword between his knees as he attempted to secure it onto his face.

The group watched for a painful minute as he struggled to adjust the straps on the side, his fingers fumbling with the size differences so that when he held his hands out triumphantly the result looked more lopsided than the leaning tower of pisa.

“Is it good?” He asked, his eyes screwed shut behind the lenses.

Tubbo looked away with a grimace, glancing back at the hive as he considered returning to his previous project, regardless of whether the goggles worked or not, while Sapnap and Punz exchanged pitiful looks.

“Here, just—” Dream let out a wheeze, reaching towards the atrocity, “just let me help you with that, oh my *gods* .”

“*What* ? What’s wrong with it?” George asked through a nervous chuckle as one of the straps slid off his ear.

“Everything, you ruined my gift.” Tubbo sighed sadly.

“You’re such a liar,” George scoffed.

“No, he’s right,” Dream snorted as he resized the straps, fixing the frame so that lenses no longer rested halfway on George’s nose.

“Yeah George that was kind of embarrassing, why were you struggling so much? Have you never worn a belt or something?” Sapnap asked.

“Shut up! I have, I just never wore a belt on my *face* you freak— Ow! Okay stop, no, that went *in* my eye!” He yelled, slapping Dream’s hand away.

“No it *didn’t* you’re so dramatic, just let me finish!” He snickered, slapping George’s hand in return and tugging on the google frames on final time to ensure that they wouldn’t fall off, “Okay, it’s good, you can open your eyes now.”

George gulped, “R-right now?”

“Uh actually—” Tubbo began.

“Right now.” Dream confirmed, cutting him off.

“Okay, right...NOW!” He cried, his eyes snapping open and immediately catching onto the pair

staring directly at him.

“Well, what do you see?!” Sappnap exclaimed, bouncing around excitedly.

George huffed in disappointment, “Nothing except Dream’s ugly face in full yellow,” he snarked, “the stupid thing doesn’t work.”

“*Obviously* it doesn’t work!” Tubbo cried, “You have to press the top button on the right lense, that’s what I was *trying* to tell you.”

“Oh.” George said lamely.

“You are all very foolish,” Tubbo scoffed, placing his hands on his hips as he glanced at the trio, “you should listen to the professional more attentively next time.”

“Yeah *George* , you’re so *foolish* ,” Sappnap echoed in a mock British accent, “Oi could nawt believe you would do such a shchewpid thing.”

“Shut *up* oh my god.” George snorted.

“Is *this* the button?” Dream asked, his hand hovering over the side of the frame.

“Well there’s only *one* button at the top,” Tubbo pointed out matter-of-factly.

“Right,” he muttered under his breath, “Okay George, are you ready now?”

“No, I’m scared.”

“Well...” Dream began, trailing off as he stared into George’s eyes, “too bad,” he pressed the button before George could shriek in defiance or demand a countdown, and the world exploded into millions of hues, rendering the son of Poseidon speechless.

“Wow ,” he breathed, the weapon in between his legs clattering to the ground as he stared into the overwhelming deep green in front of him, “Your eyes— are they green? Is this what green looks like?!”

“Uh, yeah?” Dream snickered, “Why, do you think they’re *pretty* ?” he batted his lashes and shot him a flirtatious smirk.

“Yes,” George replied without missing a beat, causing Dream to freeze in his spot. He stared back at George’s eyes, hardly daring to breathe as the mesmerized demigod raised his hand and reached for his face, hovering delicately over his cheek.

Dream sucked in a breath, “W-what are you—?” he began softly just before George’s finger stabbed his eye, “OW! What the fuck are you *doing*?!” he yelled, stumbling backwards as he clutched his face.

As Dream backed away from George, the neon monstrosity that was his hoodie entered George’s vision.

“Oh my god *EW!* Is *that* what your hoodie looks like?!” George screeched, covering the lenses as the green abomination revealed itself in its full oversaturated glory, “That is *disgusting* oh my god *burn it!* I thought it was bad *before!* I change my mind, color is gross, I don’t want this anymore.” He tugged at the straps securing the goggles to his face in an attempt to rip it off.

“Don’t you *dare*, I’m not helping you put it on correctly again after you nearly *blinded* me,” Dream

warned, still rubbing at his eye as Tubbo patted him on the back sympathetically.

“Wait so if Dream looks disgusting that means it *actually* worked, right?!” Sapnap cried, “That’s amazing! Tubbo you’re *so* cool!”

“Yes! That is true!” Tubbo exclaimed, leaving Dream behind as he tugged on George’s shirt, “Look over here! My apron is *also* green but it’s different.”

George glanced at the boy who gestured proudly at his dirty, oil stained work apron, “Oh that’s a *dark* green,” he remarked, “but it’s not the same kind of dark as Dream’s eyes. His green looks… healthy. Your’s looks dirty.”

Sapnap snickered at the comparison, “Hey George, what about me? How do *I* look? I don’t have *any* kind of green so I probably look way better than Dream.”

“There is a *long* list of things that look better than Dream right now,” George grimaced, glancing at the ironically named Dream, his hoodie more reminiscent of a nightmare, “Isn’t it dangerous to be exposed to something so highly saturated? Can’t you go *blind* from that?!”

“Pff, yeah, it’s almost as gross as the camp t-shirts,” Punz snickered, gesturing to the shirt underneath his apron, “How bad are *these* ?”

“Oh my god, you’re *lying* , the camp does *not* make you wear those.” He gasped, shuffling towards Punz and touching the material, “This *can’t* be real. What color *is* that? Is that *orange*?”

“This is not a good representation of what orange looks like, most oranges don’t look this bad,” Punz explained, “but yeah, it’s orange.”

“That’s so bad, wait what’s red?!”

“I have red here! On my shirt!” Sapnap exclaimed, tugging the garment in excitement, “Right here on the fire symbol! Look!”

George snapped his head in Sapnap’s direction and stared at the design, carrying the oh so familiar yellow alongside a nicer shade of orange and finally, red.

“So *that’s* what all the hype is about, huh,” he muttered, “Wait now I know what dummy I can try my sword on!”

“Yes! Red! Red! Red!” Sapnap cheered, snatching the sword off the ground and thrusting it into George’s hand, “Go hit that dummy!” He pushed him towards the mannequins.

“I’m about to hit *this* dummy, if he does stop shoving me around.” George warned, raising his sword in a manner that was supposed to be threatening, and might’ve been, if he wasn’t holding the weapon by its blade.

“You’re holding it wrong,” Tubbo remarked, pointing at George’s hand.

“Oh whoops,” He chuckled sheepishly, flipping the sword over as the blade reformed itself into a sharp tip, “NOW I’m gonna hit this dummy!”

“No *please* wait! Don’t!” Sapnap screamed, darting behind Punz, “The other dummy is a cooler red than me, go hit *that*!”

“He kinda has a point, it really is a cooler red,” Punz nodded, “also if you test it out first then you

can make *sure* that when you hit him it'll actually hurt."

"Wh—!"

"That's a good point! Thanks Punz." George smirked, turning towards the dummies.

"Why didn't *you* just test it out," Sapnap muttered under his breath, still cowering behind Punz.

"Because it needs to work for *him* not for me," he replied, turning to look over his shoulder just to make sure that Sapnap would see his eye roll.

"George doesn't need a fucking weapon, he could just scream and poke monster's eyes out," Dream groaned, "Did you lace your fingers with *poison*?! Why do my eyes still burn?!"

"Because your eyes are weak and my fingers are strong," he snickered, lifting the sword above his head, "And so is my weapon!"

He brought the sword down on the head of the red dummy, the flat of the weapon making a smacking sound as it hit the material and slid off harmlessly. George frowned and gave the weapon an unimpressed look.

"It's broken."

"What's *broken* is your stance, oh my gods." Dream huffed, lifting himself off the ground to once again help George readjust himself, "I swear if my eyes weren't already burning from your *attack* on them they would be burning from your sad attempts at hitting that dummy."

"Yeah George that was kind of embarrassing, why were you struggling so much? Have you never been asked to wield a deadly weapon before?" Sapnap asked.

"*No* I haven't because I'm not a *freak* like you guys!" George exclaimed as Dream smacked his legs into a position that wouldn't result in him tipping over at the slightest breeze, "OW! Stop *hitting* me!"

"Well I can't move your legs *for* you so this is the best you're gonna get, sorry," Dream rolled his eyes, "Now rotate the sword like *this* , so that the actual sharp part is what's hitting the dummy and not the flat part."

"Ohhhh, I get it, so *now* can I hit it?"

"If you want your wrist to *snap* then sure, go ahead," Dream snickered, "it looks like it's *crying*, look how your wrist is sticking out!" He wrapped his hand around George's own and pushed it inwards so that the weight of the sword wouldn't bend his wrist painfully, "See *now* it won't shatter on impact because your wrist won't be the only thing carrying the force of the blow."

"Okay so what do I do with my right hand? Can't I use that one too?" he asked, waving it around in front of his face.

"Not on *this* type of sword," he replied, smacking George's hand down, "the hilt isn't long enough for both of your hands and it'll just be clumsy, you could keep your other hand out for balance, or, in an absolute worst case scenario, to punch your opponent in the face."

George's eyes widened and he glanced over his shoulder to look at Dream, "You're lying, there's no way that's an *actual* thing in sword fights."



“I mean, not always, and *definitely* not when you’re fighting other people that also have weapons. In that scenario you gotta go for the hand holding the weapon and try to hurt it in some way, but that’s only if you’re getting close enough, and if they’re not double wielding and a ton of other things. Besides, whenever *you’re* gonna be fighting another weapon-wielder you’ll already be at an immediate advantage because you’re a lefty, most righties are experienced with fighting against *other* righties while lefties are *also* experienced with fighting against righties, so you know all their tricks while they still need to get used to yours! The punching thing can come in handy when fighting monsters because they don’t have a weapon hand to aim for, so if they already got close enough for you to use your hand just *swing*, okay?”

“Swing,” George echoed, “Okay, yeah, I can do that *easily* !” He flexed his noodle arm and Dream wheezed.

“Nevermind, don’t even try it,” he snorted, “If a monster gets close enough to you for that just start praying to your dad, you’ll have a better chance that way.”

“Ugh, *rude*,” George scoffed, “Can I just hit the dummy now?”

“Nope, you gotta relax your shoulders, you don’t want to put too much pressure on the area since the kind of swing you’re trying is gonna need the power of your *whole* body, not just the shoulder. That also goes for punching by the way in case you’re still planning on doing that.” He pushed down on George’s shoulder, lowering it as the tension slowly eased from the muscle.

“Okay, *now* you’re ready, make sure to get your torso into that pull and HIT IT!” Following the instructions, George twisted his body outwards before bringing the sword down, slashing the dummy’s chest open.

“I DID IT!” He cried.

“Woo hoo! Go George!” Sapnap cheered from behind Punz.

“Now I can hit *you* properly!”

“NO! Nevermind! Boo you need more training! All you know is a downward swing that leaves your torso open! Lame! Lame! You suck!”

“I hate it when Sapnap makes good points,” Dream muttered, “it makes him feel smart and then he does stupid things.”

George snickered and lowered the weapon, still beaming from the successful hit. He turned to look back at the damage he dealt but the cut had disappeared.

“What?! What happened to it?! I cut it right here! That’s so not fair!” George cried, running his hand over the dummy’s chest, “Where did my cut go?”

“It’s a self healing dummy, you dummy, why do you think you needed to hit the red one?” Sapnap rolled his eyes, “That material can self heal from *sword* cuts, the others heal from other things. If all the dummy’s just kept all their injuries then we would go through seven thousand dummies a *day* with how much Tommy likes to attack them.”

“But my cut!” George whined.

“*BuT mY cUt!*” Sapnap whined back in a mockery.

“That’s it, I’m gonna ‘downward swing with the torso open’ your head off!” George declared,

waving the sword around in the air as Sapnap screeched and grabbed Punz's shoulder, angling him in the direction of George's attack.

"No! No! No! Leave me out of this!" Punz yelled, snatching the collar of Sapnap's shirt and dragging the screaming man out from behind him, "That's it! I'm kicking the three of you out of the forge! Go fight outside! Dream, stop wheezing and come break these two up or you're gonna be late!"

"You can't be *late* to a *quest*!" Dream wheezed.

"Maybe, but you can definitely be *early* to *Elysium*. Go away. Say thank you to Tubbo for his nice present and leave. You're worse than Tommy, I swear to the gods!"

With a final call of thanks to the boy who had already turned back to his hive project, all three quest goers were kicked out of the forge, literally in Dream's case as Punz didn't have any more hands left to drag him out with.

"Are you still gonna try to 'downward swing with the torso open' my head off?" Sapnap asked nervously as Dream gasped for air beside them.

"Nah, I'll do it when you're not running away, I don't feel like chasing you," George replied, waving him off, "Where do I put *this* when I'm not using it though?"

"Stick it up your ass like the rest of us, duh," Sapnap rolled his eyes.

"Yeah I'm sure *you* do," George guffawed, "Don't you have a, what's it called? A sheath?"

"Just take Sapnap's since apparently he doesn't need it," Dream snickered, clambering to his feet.

"What? No! I'm not giving him *anything*! It's *mine*!" Sapnap whined, clutching the weapon holster at his side and pressing it to his hip in defiance.

"Okay, relax, I was just *kidding*," Dream huffed as he unclipped his own sheath, "he can have mine, our swords are more similar anyways, and your sheath is only for righties." He took his own sword out of its scabbard and threw the belt to George.

"What, are you ambidextrous or something?" George asked as his eyes followed the sheath through the air watching it flop onto the ground at his feet.

"Oh my *gods*," Sapnap groaned, "Don't ask him that! He's gonna go off on his whole 'Oh look at mE! I'm dReAm! I studied fighting techniques for yEaRs before I went on my first quest to ensure my success in them! That's why I know how to sword fight with my right hand, my left hand, every single one of my toes and even with the sword clenched between my ass cheeks! Isn't that so impressive? Doesn't that just make you want to kiss my face?'" He batted his lashes and clasped his hands together, making obnoxious kissy faces at George.

"I don't sound like that," Dream grumbled.

"You *totally* do! Right George?" Sapnap asked, turning to the boy who was fumbling with the belt in his hands, "Oh my gods, you *lied*! You can't put on a belt! Ha!"

"Shut *up* yes I can! This just has a giant *thing* attached to the side and it keeps smacking my leg and getting me confused," He huffed as the belt slid off his hips again and glanced at Dream in a silent plea.

“Don’t ask me to fix *this* for you too because I’m not going to.” Dream scowled.

“I *wasn’t*, I don’t need your help,” George lied, turning back to the complicated act.

“I can help you if you want,” Sapnap offered.

George looked him up and down with a grimace, “No thanks.”

“Wh—! You’re so *rude*! What, you would say yes to Dream but not to me?” he pouted.

“Exactly, it’s because you smell bad,” George snickered, rolling his eyes.

“*You’re* the one who smells bad here!” Sapnap screeched, “You didn’t even *shower* after yesterday, you’re so gross! I wouldn’t want to help you anyway! You and Dream can have each other, he still wets the bed. You’ll be a pissbaby and a stinky boy together while *I’ll* be enjoying smelling nice and fresh.” He flipped his hair dramatically and turned on his heel, trudging down the hill without so much as a second glance.

“Sapnap you’re going the wrong way!” Dream called to him with a chuckle, “We’re trying to *leave* camp, not get lost in the potato fields!”

“Pff, duh!” Sapnap scoffed back, “I *know* that already! I *am* going the right way!” He lied, looping back around in a big circle so that he’d be walking towards the camp gates.

Dream glanced back at George, who was still fiddling with the belt, “Oh my *gods* you’re *actually* embarrassing.” Dream rolled his eyes, walking over and fixing the strap with one swift tug as he grabbed George’s new weapon and shoved it into its scabbard, “There, now let’s follow Sapnap before he gets himself lost.”

“Yeah! Maybe he **SHOULD** get lost!” George yelled, cupping his hands over his mouth to make sure Sapnap’s receding figure would hear him.

“**FUCK YOU GEORGE! YOU WANNA GO? LET’S GO!**”

“OKAY SURE, LET’S GO!” George cried as he sprinted down the hill, chasing the screaming Sapnap all the way to the exit, with Dream wheezing and running along behind them.

# Highway to Hell || George

## Chapter Notes

I (Gra55) would like to make a formal apology for being a huge fucking liar and saying that we would be putting out this chapter at a normal hour. We did not. Thank you for your continuous support despite the egregious times in which we post our updates.

Please make sure to check the end notes to help us rework our upload schedule!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George tapped his toes against the pavement and sighed, shifting uncomfortably as his ass was absolutely fried by the burning, metal bench.

Despite the miles of forest surrounding them from all sides, with only the winding road right ahead offering a break from the ample trees, the sun had still managed to snake its rays between the branches and onto the exact spot where people would be trying to sit.

*I really wish I had an egg right now, I always wanted to try frying one outside on a hot day*

Thoughts of egg frying lead to thoughts of breakfast, which he suddenly remembered that he didn't have any of. The ambrosia thing seemed to be holding up pretty well for now though, and he honestly didn't know if he'd be able to eat *anything* after the whole bacon fiasco in case Technoblade found himself somehow related to any other barn animals.

He sighed again and looked around for a distraction as they waited for the bus to arrive. Eyes glancing towards the floor, he spotted a fading styrofoam cup with the logo of some nearby gas station printed onto it. He absentmindedly kicked the cup in Sapnaps direction, who in turn, gave George a mischievous smile and kicked it back with a snicker. The cup made a few successful rounds between the two demigods before it flew too far in Dreams direction and was instantly crushed underneath the man's boots.

"Why though?" Sapnap whispered, sending a pout in Dreams direction.

Rolling his eyes, Dream stared out towards the road before him, "you guys are so stupid," his gaze intensified, as though it would somehow cause their bus to magically appear over the horizon, "we have to concentrate."

George grumbled and began to fiddle with his sword, "We've been waiting for *hours*, is this even an active bus stop?" He looked pointedly at the weeds growing around the area, noting their height and substantial spread.

"It *should* be, people in camp use it all the time." Sapnap shrugged and scratched the back of his neck, "We should probably take—"

"Guys!" Dream shouted as he jumped to his feet, "there it is!" He was shortly followed by the other two demigods as a wave of excitement washed over all three of them.

"Oh my god!" George cried out, "I don't even *care* how crowded it is, just get me in there already!"

The bus inched closer to their stop, bringing the empty seats into clear view of the trio, eliciting cheers and enthusiastic high-fives from George and Sapnap.

"Hell YEAH! FREE BUS!"

"Oh my *fucking gods*," Dream groaned, slumping back onto the bench.

"What? What fucking gods? We've got a *bus* Dream, GET UP!" Sapnap yelled at the son of Athena, tugging at his arms as he tried to get him up.

"Look at it you fucking idiots!"

The bus whizzed past them, proudly displaying its *Not in Service* status above its windshield. The bus driver shot them a questioning glance as he sped past them, leaving them to wait gods know how long for the next bus.

"I hate New York." Sapnap huffed, plopping back down onto the frying-pan-impersonating bench.

"What was that guy looking at us like that for?"

"Uh, have you seen us?" Dream snorted glancing between the three of them, "We look like cosplayers with a budget in the negatives—"

"Our SWORDS!" George gasped, gripping the weapon at his side.

"That too, yeah."

"We can't go on public transport like this, we'll get kicked off!" he tried to hide his weapon behind his waist to no avail, "Isn't this illegal or something?"

"In America? Nothing's illegal. Or everything is. It depends." Sapnap snickered beside him, "don't worry about it though, you're a foreigner, they'll understand."

"What do you *mean* they'll understand! What about you!"

"Oi!" Sapnap drawled, "I can dew ay pritty good bri'ish aksent downt yew fink?" He leaned back on the bench and tipped an invisible tophat in George's direction.

Dream laughed as Sapnap's crude display elicited his renowned tea kettle wheeze, "You're such an idiot," he doubled over and held his stomach, "Sapnap, you're killing me!"

"A bri'ish ij-yit innit?"

"Guys this is SERIOUS! How are we getting on the bus with these?" George frantically raised his hands in a panic before bringing them back down to gesture towards his sheath, "Dream doesn't even have his concealed! He has it out in the open!"

"What?! That's crazy! I didn't even realize I had it out!" Dream raised the sword off his lap and swung it around, slashing wide arcs into the air.

"No way!" Sapnap scoffed, "next you're gonna tell us that his mask is too creepy to wear in public." He rolled his eyes and crossed his arms at the son of Poseidon.

"It *IS*!" George screeched, "How can you guys be so CALM about this?!"

"Cuz it's not a big deal." Dream shrugged.

"NOT A BIG—! You're lying. You're both such *liars*."

"*Yeahhhh*, we're just fuckin with you," Sapnap snickered, eliciting a kick from Dream aimed at his shin, "Ow! What the *hell*! I just wanted to clear things up before the bus got here, man!" He whined, "Look it's right there!" He gestured to the end of the road where a bus that was *actually* in service this time came rolling up towards their stop.

"Huh, I didn't even see that, oops."

"Just *oops*? C'mon Dream, you gotta kiss it better—"

"Can you guys *explain* how we're getting on a PUBLIC BUS with SWORDS!"

Sapnap pretended to fix monocle onto his face, "it's quite simple really, we—"

"If you say *anything* British I'll scream," George warned the son of Hephaestus, "OR American." He added after noticing Sapnap still had a shit eating grin spread across his face.

His grin quickly disappeared and Dream snorted from behind, "Mortals can't actually see any of this stuff," he supplied helpfully before nodding towards the approaching bus, "you'll see your reflection on the bus doors when it pulls up, *that's* what you look like for mortals."

The bus screeched to a halt in front of them and George glanced hesitantly at their reflections before the doors opened to let them in.

"Oh my *god*," he grimaced, willing his body to shrink out of existence.

"C'mon, in ya go, we don't got all day," the bus driver drawled, beckoning George onto the bus while effortlessly ignoring the idiotic sight before him.

"The mist can be pretty shit at hiding our stuff, we're lucky the gods picked New York so we fit right in regardless," Sapnap whispered to George, pushing him onto the bus and swiping their metros for them before dragging him to the back seats.

"We look so *dumb*," George hissed towards both men, smiling nervously at the few passengers that bothered to glance at them weirdly.

"I wasn't paying attention, what'd we look like?" Dream asked, picking a row and scooting over as Sapnap and George took the two empty seats to his right.

"Like *clowns*," George groaned, burying his face in his hands, nearly pitching forward and out of the seat as their bus rolled out of the stop, "I'm wearing fucking *clout goggles*! And they made this shirt look like an even *shittier* supreme knockoff! Why?! It looked fine with the sticker! Before it looked like an ironic shirt, now it looks like I actually tried! It's so embarrassing."

"The mist works in mysterious ways," Dream mocked, wiggling his fingers around to emphasize the 'mysticism'.

"It's called *mist*?"

"Yeah, but it's more like a fart to be honest," Sapnap snickered to his side, "Oh! What does your sword look like?!"

"*No*. I'm *not* telling you."

"C'mon! What is it?" Sapnap pleaded, shaking George's arm as he urged him to confess.

"You should've been paying attention." George huffed, "Maybe I'll tell you what *you* look like!"

"Yes!" Sapnap gasped, "Do me after! But first tell me about your sword! I promise I won't laugh at you."

"You promise?"

"Yes, I swear on Dreams handsome face that I won't laugh at you."

"You're supposed to swear on something that *exists*." George snickered as Sapnap gave a scandalized gasp.

"George!" He cried, pulling away from him to lean on Dream, "You're so MEAN!"

"Yeah George you really hurt my feelings," Dream sniffed, dabbing at his eyes dramatically.

"I'm *kidding*, I'm kidding, I guess it counts if *you* believe in it," George snorted, "the mist is making it look like I have... like I have a...."

"Spit it out already!"

"LikeIhaveaVSCObottlestrappedtomybelt!" He breathed, "Okay now it's Sapnap's—"

"Wait wait wait, hold on, it's **WHAT?!**" Dream spluttered, a wheeze building up in the back of his throat.

"Did you say VSCO bottle?!" Sapnap managed as his jaw dropped to the filthy city-bus floor, "dude, there's *no way* the mist is just making you a look like a dead meme, I—"

"A DEAD MEME!" Dream wheezed, keeling over and practically crushing Sapnap with his weight as the passengers closest to them shot them irritated glares.

George felt his face heat up in embarrassment as he attempted to defend himself, "W-well I didn't *choose* to look like this, I would pick a different thermos brand if I could-

"YOU'RE SAYING THE *THERMOS BRAND* IS WHAT RUINED YOUR LOOK!" Dream cackled, throwing his head back as Sapnap continued staring at him with a slack-jawed expression.

"You *promised* you wouldn't laugh," George muttered.

"No, *Sapnap* promised he wouldn't laugh," Dream replied between tears, "I would never promise to do something as stupid as not laughing at you."

"Whatever! At least I don't look like I'm carrying *a broom* around!" George cried defensively.

"*WHO'S CARRYING A BROOM?!*" Dream cried, coughing painfully as Sapnap slapped him on the back in support.

"YOU!" George screamed, pointing at the sword that lay across Dreams lap, the sharp edge coming dangerously close to the head of the passenger in front of them.

"Yes he do the cooking, yes he do the cleaning," Sapnap hummed, sending Dream into an even greater laughing fit.

"It has *never* been a broom before," Dream heaved as he listed off the shapes his sword had taken, "I've gotten baseball bat, golf club, hockey stick—"

"Why are they all sports related?" George cut in.

"Golf is *not* a sport." Sarnap rolled his eyes, "Golf is a sport like tomatoes are fruits."

"Tomatoes ARE fruits!" Dream retorted, his previous train of thought lost.

"No they're NOT! Have you EVER put a tomato in a fruit salad?!"

"Okay I've never put an *avocado* in a fruit salad but it's still a fruit, so why are tomatoes different?"

"Wait, avocados are fruits?" George piped in, "I don't think that's right."

"It *is*! *I'm* the son of Athena here, I know everything!"

"Everything except how to not wet the bed!" Sarnap snickered.

The person in front of them glanced over their shoulder in disgust and moved up a seat.

Dream slapped Sarnap on the back of the head, "You're so *stupid*."

"*You're* stupid, broom boy!" Sarnap cried in retaliation, rubbing the back of his head painfully.

"I bet it's better than what *you* have! George, what does Sarnap's sword look like?!"

"He got the most normal one, it's just a megaphone!"

"What?! That's so unfair! He's already loud enough as is!"

"Haha! *I* don't look like an idiot and you guys do!" Sarnap puffed his chest out proudly.

"You don't *need* the mist to help you look like an idiot, you already look like one with your weird head bandage." George snorted.

"It's a *bandana*! And it's to help keep my brain protected because it has all this *knowledge* in it."

"What knowledge? You still struggle to tie your shoelaces sometimes." Dream snickered.

"Nuh uh! I'm the lace-tying champion!" Sarnap declared, folding his arms across his chest, "Plus I remember every single prophecy I was ever told by heart, that's why you need me."

"That *is* true."

"Wait, actually? You didn't, like, right it down or something?" George asked, raising his eyebrow.

"Nope! It's all in here!" Sarnap tapped his skull proudly, "We should review it while we still have time, this bus ride is like two hours long, and then we have to transfer and sit for *another* two hours before we get there."

"No, you're *lying*, it can't be that long."

"I'm not! You can check the map!"

"No actually, how long is it?"

"It's ACTUALLY four hours! I'm not happy about it either!" Sarnap cried, throwing his hands up in the air.



"Hell better be *so* worth the trip." George groaned, throwing himself against the back of the seat.

"It is, I'll show you all the cool tourist spots." Sapnap nodded.

"Wait, you've been there before?"

"Yeah, and it was all *Dream's* fault! He dragged me and Bad all the way down there for a bunch of stupid gifts and then he LOST all of them! Like an IDIOT!"

"Ugh, don't *remind* me," Dream groaned, burying his face in his hands.

"I don't *need* to remind you, you already named your broom after the whole thing so you'll 'never forget your failures' or something stupid like that." Sapnap rolled his eyes.

George glanced between the two of them, "I have no clue what you guys are talking about."

"It doesn't *matter*, okay? We just went on a quest and I failed. I lost a bunch of gifts that my mom wanted me to get for her and the only thing that was left was this sword. She gave it to me as a reminder of my mistake."

"No she DIDN'T!" Sapnap scoffed, punching Dream in the shoulder, "You're so *dramatic*, she was really nice about it! *You're* the one who took one look at this super rare, super expensive, shiny Thracian steel sword and decided to name it '*pirate hoe*'-!"

"It's pronounced *paraitó*! Not *pirate hoe*, you KNOW this! And I named him that because it means 'to give up', to represent everything we've lost on that journey."

Sapnap shot Dream an unimpressed look and leaned over in George's direction "*Sooo* dramatic." He whispered.

"What *ever*, don't you have a prophecy to recite or something?" Dream huffed.

"Heck yeah! I got this, okay, just let me warm up," Sapnap cleared his throat and stretched his arms over his head. He turned in his seat until his spine made a satisfying clicking sound and then moved onto his neck before cracking each individual knuckle on his hand one by one.

"And *I'm* the dramatic one," Dream muttered.

"Shut up! Don't you have a floor to sweep? Let me do my thing!" He went over each of his fingers again and then stood to stretch his leg.

"Okay, no, now you're just being stupid, I don't think you actually remember this prophecy at all." George crossed his arms.

"Oh yeah? Three shall journey to the land of the rotten, and through one's folly, his knowledge forgotten. The forsaken leagues will bring delay, branches entwined they'll set ablaze. The lovers' hearts chaos commands, to deny or accept true love's demands!"

George stared at the self-righteous man in awe, "Was that word for word?"

"Yup, he's just like the oracle but twice as ugly." Dream snorted.

"You're so MEAN, Dream! After everything I do for you." Sapnap sniffed, rubbing mock tears out of his eyes.

"I thought *I* was the one that did the cooking and the cleaning around here," he raised an eyebrow,

gesturing to his shiny, sharp broom.

“Yeah but *I’m* the one that brings home the money and memorizes the prophecies!”

“That doesn’t matter! I still do the most around this house.”

“Oh shut up, Dream! Go to hell!”

“Is that you talking or the prophecy?”

“Both! At least, according to Chiron. He solved that one *really* quickly for us.”

“So that’s what the first line meant?” George asked, “The three is us and the land of the rotten is the underworld?”

“Exactly!” Sappnap clicked his tongue, throwing up a pair of finger guns at him.

“Oh so then this is going to be so easy! We just have to figure out what the poem means and then follow those steps, right?”

“It’s not a *to do list*, George,” Dream snorted, “It’s more like a warning. The prophecy is just telling you what’s gonna happen, we don’t get a say in it.”

“That’s...the same thing. We have to follow the steps, like I said.”

“No but—! You know what? Whatever, you’ll just see when it happens.”

“O *kay*,” George rolled his eyes, turning back to Sappnap, “What was the next line again?”

“And through one’s folly, his knowledge forgotten. NO! I *just* started talking about how much knowledge I have! It’s a sign! I’m gonna become dumb!” Sappnap wailed.

“Well then I guess that part of the prophecy is already fulfilled,” George snickered.

“Wh—?! George!”

“I actually think it’s gonna be *you* George, I mean ‘through one’s folly’? You’ve already made plenty of mistakes that could’ve ended up with your ‘knowledge forgotten’. Maybe you’ll bang your head again and finally get amnesia.”

“*Finally?!* ” George quirked an eyebrow at him, “What, are you waiting for it or something?”

“Yup! I’ll throw you a memory-loss party once it happens.”

“Well let’s just *hope* it’s George and not me, we can’t afford to lose all my precious knowledge,” Sappnap remarked, rubbing the top of his head.

“Okay well use your *knowledge* to tell us the next line, just in case it *does* end up being you.” George huffed.

“Uh, the forsaken leagues will bring delay.” Sappnap scratched his head under the bandana, “Isn’t a league, like, with a person you’re trying to ask out? You know ‘oh they’re way out of my league’ or something like that?”

“Pff, Sappnap, don’t be an idiot.” George rolled his eyes.

“What?! I’m right!”

“Why would they be talking about that kind of league in a prophecy like this?”

“I don’t know! Maybe one of us has to ask somebody out once we get to the underworld? You think there are any hot dead chicks over there?”

“Oh my gods, shut up!” Dream hissed, “They probably mean league like a squad or... the unit of measure?”

“What the hell kind of unit of measure is a league?!” Sappnap cried, throwing his arms up in the air, “What is this, the 1500’s? Who uses leagues?”

“Probably the hot dead chick you need to ask out,” George snickered.

“Oh, that’s true! Hey Dream, how far *is* a league, I gotta be able to impress her.”

“What kind of stuff are you guys gonna be talking about that you need to know how long a league is—?”

“Shut up guys, I’m trying to think here,” Dream cut them off, “What kind of league would be forsaken? Is there a mythological road that no man has ever travelled or something?”

“Well don’t look at me, *I* don’t know anything,” George raised his arms defensively.

“Obviously,” Dream muttered under his breath, “What about you Sappnap, does your great knowledge have anything to offer for us?”

“Uh, maybe it’s talking about a baseball league—?”

“Okay, nevermind, let’s move on, you’re both useless.”

“*Rude*, maybe I just won’t tell you the next line, then we’ll see who’s useless.” Sappnap crossed his arms and stuck his tongue out.

“Fine, it’s just George that’s useless, can please tell me the next line?”

“Hey!”

“Sure! It’s ‘branches entwined they’ll set ablaze’. Oh that one’s easy! Let’s just set a twig on fire right now and get it over with.”

“It’s *definitely* not that easy, it’s probably some kind of metaphorical branch.”

“What kind of metaphor would a branch even be for?” George asked.

“Oh I know! It would be a metaphor for a tree!” Sappnap exclaimed.

“That literally doesn’t make *any* sense, do you know what a metaphor is?”

“Wait, he might actually be onto something,” Dream butt in, George and Sappnap both turning to him with equivalent amounts of shock on their face.

“He *is*?!”

“*I am*?! I mean, I-I am! Yeah! Just explain it for *George* because he was too *dumb* to get it the first

time.”

“Well, you’re not *completely* right, but maybe it’s a metaphor for a *family* tree. Like, our *godly* family tree.”

“Oh, okay, I get it!” Sapnap nodded, “Wait, so why is it on fire?”

“Maybe the gods are gonna throw a fit and start raining hellfire upon their children. *We’re* the branches being set ablaze.”

“I don’t want to be on fire,” Sapnap grimaced.

“Hey, don’t worry, we have George on our side!” Dream shot him a smile and George felt pride swelling up in his chest, “If you cry hard enough he could use your tears to choke you so that you die quicker!”

*I should’ve known*

“Oh, fuck *off*,” George rolled his eyes, “Whenever this happens I’m just gonna let *you* burn.”

“Wait, you’re not gonna save me?!” Sapnap cried.

“I’ll save *you*, don’t worry, I just won’t save Dream. We can roast marshmallows on him.”

“I’ll make sure they taste *extra* bad,” Dream snickered, “Besides, this is all just theoretical, we could be completely wrong about every single one of these, so chances are you’re not getting those marshmallows at all.”

“Yeah, Dream has been deciphering all of these so far so they’re *probably* wrong, but this next line is *all me*! I know *exactly* what it means!”

“What is it?”

“The lovers’ heart chaos commands! That *has* to be talking about us! One of you guys is in love with me! C’mon, spill the beans, don’t be shy, which one of you is it?!”

“Shut up, Sapnap, nobody loves you,” George snorted.

“Ugh, you’re SO MEAN! I *know* it’s gotta be one of you, the prophecy doesn’t lie, okay? C’mon, is it you, Dream?” Sapnap turned to him, batting his lashes as he draped himself over Dream’s arm, “Are you in love with me? Have you been keeping your love a secret from me all these years?”

“You’re such an *idiot*,” Dream snickered.

“I KNOW it’s you! Here! Listen to the next line! It’s ‘to deny or accept true love’s demands’! I DEMAND you confess your love to me right now!”

“I’m sorry to break it to you but it’s not me,” Dream rolled his eyes, pushing Sapnap off of him, “Go bother George, it’s probably him.”

“George!” Sapnap gasped, throwing himself on top of the other demigod, “Is it really you? Was it love at first sight? I know we just met but you just couldn’t help it, right? I understand, I’m really hot.”

“Pfft, you *wish*,” George pushed Sapnap’s face away, “you’re hideous and smelly.”

“No, YOU’RE hideous and smelly!” Sapnap retorted, “That’s no way to speak about somebody you *love* George!”

“That’s because I *don’t* love you!” George argued back, pushing Sapnap as he continued leaning his weight against him.

“Yes you *do*! The prophecy says so! C’mon George, gimme a kiss!” Sapnap surged forward puckering his lips.

“*NO!* Get off me you troll!”

“*Troll?!*”

“No, you’re right, I’d *rather* kiss a troll, it probably smells better!”

“Yeah! Smells better than *you*, maybe!”

The two continued wrestling and throwing insults at each other when, finally, Sapnap’s sheath was jostled to the point where his sword came flying off and its hilt nailed Dream directly in the forehead.

“O *kay*, that’s it!” Dream yelled, grabbing Sapnap around the waist and wrenching the pair of children apart, settling himself in between them as he threw Sapnap his sword back, “You guys aren’t allowed to sit next to each other anymore! I’ve had it with you!”

George frowned at Sapnap, who folded his arms and stuck his tongue out at him. They held their glares for about five seconds before a snicker escaped George’s mouth and they both fell into a fit of giggles.

“You guys are *impossible*, we’re spending the next hour and whatever of this bus ride in total silence, I don’t wanna hear a peep from *either* of you or we’re turning around and going right back to camp! Quest be damned!”

“Sorry *dad*,” Sapnap snickered, before settling himself comfortably at Dream’s side, leaning his head against his shoulder, “I’m gonna take a nap, wake me up when we have to transfer buses, okay?”

“Thank the gods,” Dream muttered, “Yeah, sure, good night Sap.”

“Ew, you’re letting him sleep on your shoulder? He’s gonna drool on it.”

“Nuh uh! At least I don’t snore in my sleep like you do!”

“You don’t *know* that!”

“I’ve seen you asleep more than I’ve seen you awake!” Sapnap countered.

“Be quiet before I make sure BOTH of you end up asleep *permanently!*”

“He started it,” Sapnap grumbled, burying his face into the disgusting green hoodie.

George rolled his eyes with a small smile and turned the other way, watching the view outside his window as the bus passengers gave a collective sigh of relief over the blissful silence. As the scenery changed from a sea of trees to a speckle of buildings and the gentle rumble of the bus had long since lulled Sapnap into a deep sleep, the bus driver announced their soon approaching stop.

Dream adjusted himself in his seat, turning to George, “You guys better not be arguing like that the entire journey.” He warned.

“I’m not making any promises.” George shrugged, “He’s *really* annoying.”

“Just relax, okay? Don’t start with him.”

“I *didn’t*,” George rolled his eyes, “besides, our fights aren’t serious, they’re funny. Some people can fight without being *actual* assholes, you know.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Dream quirked his eyebrows.

“It means that *somebody* here that I’ve argued with has been a real prick, and it’s not Sapnap.”

“What are you talking about? I never did anything to you!”

“Excuse me? You haven’t done anything?” George scoffed, turning fully to face Dream, “Did my face just slap *itself* when I was crying over my dead brother?”

“Oh come *on*, you weren’t listening! I was trying to explain your situation to you and all you were doing was sending yourself into a panic. I was *helping* you.”

“Usually when people are trying to help each other they don’t slap each other in the face.”

“Well I guess this time was an exception,” Dream shrugged, “I can’t believe you’re still on that, it wasn’t *that* big of a deal.”

“Wh—! Are you *listening* to yourself! What do you *mean* it wasn’t a big deal?!”

“It just wasn’t!”

“Well maybe not to you!” The bus went over a speed bump and George’s sword smacked against his leg as Sapnap’s head rolled off Dream’s shoulder, falling forward into his own chest instead, “But it was to me!”

“What do you want me to do? Apologize? I’m sorry you’re mad that I was right.”

“That’s *not* an apology, that’s you being an asshole again.”

“If you would have just listened in the first place then it wouldn’t have happened, it’s kinda your fault.”

“Why the hell would I have listened to you?! I just *met* you! The only interactions we’ve had up until that point were you kidnapping me, you telling me my brother died, you pinning me to the floor, and you completely shrugging off the fact that your friend got turned into a dolphin!” George cried, counting off each interaction with his fingers.

“You should’ve listened because I *obviously* knew more than you about the situation.” Dream rolled his eyes.

“Have you never had a *normal* interaction with someone?!” George spluttered, “What is *wrong* with you?!”

“Nothing!” Dream spat, “But something is definitely wrong with *you* if you’re still hung up on all of this! I apologized!”

“You did *not*!”

The bus screeched to a halt and the driver's voice crackled over the speakers as he announced their stop. Dream huffed and glared at George, pushing past him as he trudged off the bus with the other demigod hot on his trail.

“Do you *seriously* not get what you did wrong?! Are you some kind of fucking *child*?!” George yelled as the back doors closed behind them and the bus sped away from the stop, grateful to leave its rowdy passengers behind.

“I didn’t do *anything* wrong!” Dream yelled back, storming towards the next bus stop and not bothering to shorten his strides as George ran to keep up with him, “You’re just pointing fingers at me for no reason because you want somebody to blame for why you feel bad!”

“Why do you *think* I feel bad?! It’s because of *you* and your bitchy attitude!”

“How am I the one with a bitchy attitude?! You snapped at me for no reason!” Their next bus pulled into the stop across the street and Dream glanced at the road, dashing past the honking cars in order to catch it with George still screaming behind him.

“You *have* to be joking with me right now! You’re lying! There’s no *way* you’re serious!” He yelled, stumbling as a car horn blared directly beside him.

“Serious about what?!” Dream screeched, holding his hand up to the bus driver, who sighed unhappily as he reopened the doors to allow the new shrieking passengers on board.

“About you doing nothing wrong! You think it’s completely normal and fine that you slapped me when I was upset?” George heaved himself onto the bus, grabbing onto a handle in order to steady himself as the bus surged forward.

“That happened *two days ago*! Why does it matter now?!” Dream hissed, fumbling with the metrocards in his pockets as he swiped them into the slot.

“Because you started talking about my argument with Sapnap and blaming me for it! It wasn’t even my fault!”

“I didn’t *say* it was your fault, I just said not to fight with him anymore and not to start with him!”

“That’s *basically* saying it was my fault!”

“Okay fine! Sapnap, it was all *your* fault! Are you happy now?!”

George opened his mouth to respond but froze as he noticed Dream’s wide eyed look of horror.

“Wh—?”

“George! Oh my gods!” Dream screeched, throwing himself at the handlebars near the bus driver's seat “Stop the bus! Stop the bus!” He pleaded.

“Sorry man, you gotta wait till the next stop.” The bus driver grimaced.

“Please! We have to get off! We forgot our friend!”

“Sapnap!” George cried as the realization hit him, “Did we seriously fucking forget him?!”

“Yes! Oh my *gods*, I’m so *stupid*!” Dream groaned, “*Please* let us off! He was asleep on the other

bus! He'll get mugged or kidnapped or the rats will eat him alive!"

"Ha! You're pretty funny man, I like you, next red light I'll open up for you, alright?"

"Thank you," Dream huffed, glancing nervously at the traffic light ahead, "I can't believe I let this happen," he muttered under his breath, "C'mon mom, not-so-great-great-grandpa, someone, *please*, red light."

The light flickered from green to yellow before settling on red and both demigods let out a sigh of relief.

"Take care, man! Hope your friend's okay!" The bus driver called over his shoulder as Dream and George tore out of the bus, racing back in direction they came from.

## Chapter End Notes

We hope you enjoyed this chapter! And now for the updates:

Reworking our schedule to accommodate this fic has been pretty hard, but we're managing! We've come up with two different possible schedules that we'd like for you guys to vote on! The first would be to continue our weekly uploads with roughly 5k word updates each time, and the second is biweekly updates with 10k words for each chapter. Let us know which you prefer, or if you'd like us to play it by ear!

Regardless of which is chosen we can promise you that we'll *never* update a chapter at a normal hour, so choose based on whichever kind of chapters you like best, not when they're being uploaded in the day.



# This trip is a bust(op) || Sapnap

## Chapter Notes

Look at us! Finally updating! Let's hope the nice chunky chapter could make up the long wait.

Fun fact: this chapter is what finally made us believe we were worthy of the angst tag so 《TW》 for abandonment, tread carefully here.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*An upbeat tune played above the raucous laughter and clinking glasses of the dimly lit bar as Sapnap spun around on the dance floor. He held out his hand and grabbed a willing partner at random, twirling her around so that her fringed dress flared up slightly. She giggled, pushing him away playfully as he dramatically flailed his arms about and bumped directly into a group of partygoers.*

*He swiveled around to stammer out an apology but the group had already cleared out of the area, whispering in hushed tones as they looked over his shoulder nervously.*

*He turned back to look at the dancefloor and noticed that it had gone completely empty, save for one woman who stood right at the center of it all. Her hair was dark as night and her skin was as pale as newly fallen snow. She looked like Snow White, if Snow White had usurped the evil queen and taken her throne to become twice as evil. It was... kinda hot. Sapnap glanced around the room, noting the fearful looks on everyone's eyes as they watched her.*

*Eh, what's the worst that could happen? He shrugged, rubbing his hands together as he approached the woman.*

*"Hey the—" Oh. I understand now. As her gaze locked onto Sapnap, he instantly felt his entire body freeze over, her wintry blue stare pierced his very soul and filled it with an aching cold. If he hadn't become completely immobilized, he was sure that his teeth would've begun chattering.*

*The woman looked him up and down and sneered, throwing her long hair over her shoulder as she turned around and walked away, the crowd parting to allow her to make her exit.*

*As the icy presence of the woman disappeared, Sapnap felt the movement returning to his joints. He coughed awkwardly as the other bar patrons stared at him questioningly and his breath came out as a fine mist .*

*The music that he hadn't even noticed had stopped, resumed in full swing, bringing the crowd back onto the dancefloor as Sapnap shuffled away from it. He wandered over to the nearby bar and sat himself down onto a stool, its fabric pattern mirroring the Art Deco motif adorning the walls of the room. His bartender, a man in his late 40s, wore a black vest above a white dress shirt, with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. The hair had completely retreated off of his head, seemingly relocating to his upper lip as he sported a handlebar mustache so thick and immense it probably had its own zip code .*

*"You're the poor sap that tried to speak to the ice queen, eh?" The man snickered, speaking with a*

*Brooklyn accent thicker than his mustache, "What can I get for ya? Yah need somethin' to warm up after alla that."*

*"Pff, you got that right," Sapnap chuckled, glancing at the wide array of spirits behind the man, "Uhhh," he tapped his chin, scanning through all the foreign names, "Wait! I'm not old enough to drink!"*

*"Well I didn't say ta orda somethin alcoholic." The bartender rolled his eyes, "Waddaya, day dreamin' here kid? Check the non-alcoholics! You wanna children's menu or somethin?"*

*"NO! Just pick for me, okay?! I want to be surprised, I like surprises."*

*"Oh you're gonna be surprised alright," the bartender muttered under his breath, turning to prepare Sapnap his surprise drink.*

*"What'd you say?"*

*"Ah, nothin important, don't worry yourself about it, here, hava drink." He slid a glass over the counter in Sapnap's direction.*

*"Wh—? How'd you do that so fast?!" Sapnap gasped, the strange comment forgotten.*

*"Tricks o' the trade, kiddo," the bartender winked at him.*

*"Wait, I'm poor, I don't have money, I can't pay you for this." Sapnap nervously glanced up at the bartender, who threw a white towel over his shoulder and checked his wristwatch.*

*"Ah, don't worry about it." He waved him off, "Looks like ya won't be gettin' to enjoy it anyhow."*

*"What? Why?!"*

*"Cuz you're just about ta wake up, of course!" The bartender exclaimed, "Real sorry 'bout that, I'll save it for your next dream, alright?"*

*"Wait, dream?"*

*"Yeah, seems like he's lookin for ya, watch ya head when ya leave, alright?"*

*A small tremble rattled the room, ripples forming in Sapnap's drink as the ceiling tiles and light fixtures began to fall down.*

*"WAIT!" Sapnap shouted, another tremble, stronger than the first, rocked the bar as his drink spilled over and the bartender waved at him.*

*"Goodbye Sapnap."*

*The floor fell out from underneath him and Sapnap went tumbling into an endless abyss, screaming on his way down. The music and laughter of the bar patrons carried on above him, as though their world wasn't crumbling down before them.*

*He landed on the ground with a loud thud, jolting upwards as his head hit the bus floor painfully.*

*"OW ! What the FUCK!" He groaned, rubbing the back of his head, "Dream! Why didn't you just wake me up like a normal person you dick?!"*

*His cries were met with silence and irritated glares from several commuters who were sitting in the*

rows in front of him.

"Dream...? George...?"

He glanced at the now empty seats, the fading blue plastic taunting him as he rubbed his eyes frantically in hopes that they would somehow materialize back into existence. He swiveled his head around, twisting on the gum-laden floor as he desperately scanned the entire bus for his long gone friends.

"What the fuck? Dream! This isn't funny! George?!" He called out to both his best friend and almost best friend. He clambered back onto their seats as his breath hitched, his heart following suit, increasing its pace to join the panicked harmony.

*They can't actually be gone, right?* He quickly reached down for his sword, sighing in relief as his calloused fingers met the familiar worn leather. If there was *one* constant he could count on it was the old blade, celestial bronze gleaming as though it were brand new thanks to his constant care. He rolled his thumb absentmindedly over the hexagonal ruby at the end of the hilt, the nervous habit doing little to ease his panic. *This is SOnot funny.*

He glanced up at the other passengers, all of whom were trying their very best to mind their own business and to not get involved in his problems. Picking one unlucky victim at random, he walked, or rather stumbled, over to an old man who was sitting a couple of seats in front of him,

"Uh, excuse me?" He asked, falling into the seat behind him as the bus ran over a speed bump, or possibly a small child, considering how hard it lurched, "Did you maybe see where my friends went? You know, the other two loud guys who were sitting back here? One of them had a hydro flask, and the other one was really green and carrying a broom?" He gestured vaguely with his arms as he described them.

The stranger shifted his bag closer to him and avoided his gaze. "No, sorry." He lied, pulling out a phone and gluing his eyes to the screen, the universal sign for 'Fuck off and stop talking to me'.

Unfortunately for the man, Sapnap was not too well versed in social cues, and instead interpreted the message as 'Please try harder to annoy me' as the man turned up his game volume just to *show* how much he didn't want to be bothered. Sapnap clasped his hands together and batted his lashes innocently in an embarrassing attempt at appearing more angelic and less... himself. "*Please,*" he begged, quivering his lip for added flair, "Anything would help me out."

The man didn't bother to pause his game as he sneered at Sapnap's pout, "Can't you just call them on your phone or something?" He grumbled.

Sapnap grimaced and sucked a breath in through his teeth as he hurried to come up with an excuse as to why he, a young adult in New York City, didn't own a cellular device that *didn't* involve exposing his godly heritage. Honestly, the godly part was more believable than the idea that *anyone* could exist without owning a phone in this day and age. "Uh," he racked his brain for ideas, "My mom's *vegan*— wait, no! I mean, the battery's dead, yeah, and also my friends have it with them so..."

The man finally paused his game in order to look up at him and shoot the most unimpressed grimace known to man.

"It's cuz I don't have pockets." Sapnap tried.

The man glanced down at Sapnap's jeans, pointedly looking at the front pockets, before glancing

back up at his panicked face.

"They got off at the last stop." He muttered, unpausing the game as it shouted 'Divine!' at his masterful combos.

"Are you *serious?!* " Sapnap cried, all the panic from his half assed improv story vanishing as his fears were confirmed.

"As a heart attack."

"There's no way-"

"Just get off next stop and meet up with them," the stranger cut in, growing frustrated as the megaphone-wielding kid wouldn't leave him alone to enjoy the 1,016th level of his favorite candy game, "It's not that big of a deal."

"Oh yeah," Sapnap faltered, relaxing his posture, "you're right-"

"Unless they ditched you on purpose."

His shoulders tightened back up again, "Why would you *say* that?!" He hissed, clenching his hands into fists.

"I don't know your story, dude," the man huffed, tightening his grip on his phone. "You could be an asshole for all I know."

Sapnap ignored the man's last remark and looked out the window, "Well, when's the next stop?" He asked as the bus kept moving further and further away from the stop that Dream and George must've gotten off at.

The man, not bothering to look up from his phone this time, waved Sapnap off and pointed towards the front of the bus, "No offense," he lied, "but go ask the bus driver, I don't know any of this stuff."

"Uh, okay," Sapnap grumbled, "my bad I guess." He left the old man alone to his vices as he made his way to the front of the bus. Several bus-goers gave him sideways glances as he walked past them.

*Maybe I should've asked the mist for a hydro flask like George instead of a megaphone.*

As he approached the front, the bus driver glanced at his rearview mirror, spotting Sapnap as he clambered over, "I thought you and your friends got off already?"

"No," Sapnap chuckled weakly, "it was... it was just them."

"D'they forget you or somethin'?"

"I'm hoping it's the 'somethin' part because it'd *really* suck if they just completely forgot about me."

"Wouldn't be the first time a couple forget their third wheel cuz of a fight on here."

"*Third wheel?!* "

"Forget it kid," the man took a good look at Sapnap and raised a brow at his strange attire, "I'm guessing ya needa know when's the next stop? Maybe for a rally or someth-"

"I am *not* the third wheel." He crossed his arms and diverted his gaze towards the suddenly interesting gum-laden bus floor, "And they *didn't* forget me. Something important must've happened and they didn't wake me up for it."

The bus driver rolled his eyes and gave a noncommittal shrug, "Sure, whatever kid, are you gonna get off soon or-?"

"Wait," Sapnap shifted, his eyes narrowing as he looked at the bus driver, "you said they were *fighting* when they left?! Dream is *such* a fucking hypocrite! He *just* broke up the fight between me and George!"

"That was almost two hours ago kid," he took a sharp turn and almost knocked Sapnap off balance, "Anywho, next stop's one block down, case you were wonderin' -"

"They didn't even bother to tap me on the shoulder so I could wake up. Even a punch to the face would've been appreciated! They just....got up and left me."

The bus driver took his eyes off the road briefly and glanced at the downtrodden son of Hephaestus, "It's probably not as bad as you think" the man reasoned, "here," he said, pressing a button near the MetroCard swiper, "you wanna transfer card?" He tore the newly-printed card from the machine and handed it to Sapnap as he pulled into the bus depot. Sapnap looked at the stop with a grimace, plucking the card from the driver's hand as the doors opened beside him.

"Thanks," he sniffled as he shuffled off the bus.

"Don't mention it," the bus driver waved him off, "It's the least I could do."

As the doors closed behind him and the bus sped away, he glanced down at the white card in his hand and felt a knot of unease form in his stomach. It was stupid. It was an honest mistake. They didn't *mean* to leave him behind, he was sure of it. Dream was his friend and George was... not mean.

His vision began to blur.

*Stop being dumb.*

If there was *one* person that wouldn't leave him behind, it was Dream. They've been best friends since *forever*. Who cares if his dad failed him or if his mom dropped him off at a random camp to get rid of him. Parents are overrated anyways. And mortal friends come and go *all the time*, it wasn't a *him* thing, it was a *person* thing, right?

*Did they even notice that I'm gone yet?* He thought to himself, glancing around the bus stop.

*I mean, if they didn't leave you on **purpose** —*

He smacked his forehead before the thought could finish itself. Of *course* they realized he was gone. Duh. He was a *whole entire* human being. If Dream could remember every single pattern required to get through the puzzle part of the rock-climbing wall, he could remember his best friend.

*Best friend.*

He repeated the title like a mantra in his mind. He was *important* not some stupid *third wheel* like that bus driver said. What'd that guy know anyways?! All he knew was how to drive a bus. *Sad*. Unlike Sapnap. Sapnap was talented, he remembered prophecies and knew epic sword-fighting

techniques and went on *tons* of quests. If anyone was the third wheel it would be *George* . Not him. Not—

"SAPNAP!"

His head snapped up at the sound of his name and a giant grin broke out on his face.

"DREAM!" He cried, sprinting at his *best friend* and tackling him head on.

"Thank *gods* you woke up I thought we'd have to chase you across half the city!"

"Yeah, wouldn't want me holding us up anymore than I already have, right?" He chuckled, his voice wavering a bit as he hugged Dream tightly.

"Pff, yeah, you really messed the plan up back there." Dream snorted, pulling away from him.

"Oh shut *up* ! I was kidding! You guys are *jerks*, this was all *your* fault!"

"It was." Dream conceded, scratching the back of his neck, "we really should've been paying attention instead of arguing like a bunch of *children*. " He shot George a glare over his shoulder, the other demigod shifting awkwardly in his spot.

"So the bus driver was *serious*? ! You guys forgot to wake me up because you were too busy *fighting*? I can't believe you guys! How important was this fight that I just *escaped your mind* ! I was LITERALLY ON YOUR SHOULDER, DREAM!"

Dream winced, "*Yeeeaah*, I'm a huge idiot, Sap."

"You *are*, Being alone sucked *ass*."

"It's not happening again, from now on we're joined at the hip, okay?"

"We better be! I'm not getting left on NYC public transport, especially when I'm *asleep*! I could've DIED!"

"Stop being so dramatic," George snorted, rolling his eyes with a playful smirk.

"Hey! You're not off the hook yet, George!" Sapnap yelled, pointing an accusatory finger in his direction, "You didn't even apologize and you're half the reason I got forgotten!"

"No, Sap, it really was my fault," Dream interjected, putting a hand on Sapnap's shoulder, "I started talking about fights and stuff, we should've just taken our drama somewhere else. I let you get caught up in our shit, I should've been more responsible."

"I'm not a child, okay?" George rolled his eyes, "We were both fighting, but I'm the one who brought up *our* problems, I should've just let you say what you wanted to and leave it at that."

"Okay but you wouldn't have brought up *that* fight if I didn't start it!"

"It would've come up either way! I just chose for it to be then! It's my fault!"

"It's not! I'm the leader, so I should've been more responsible!"

"You hardly know me! You couldn't have known so it doesn't matter!"

*I'm literally standing right here and they forgot about me again.*

“Can both of you SHUT UP!” Sapnap shouted, cutting off another chance for them to abandon him and prolong their journey even more than it already had, “This is about *me*, okay? I’M the one that got left behind, stop making it about you guys already.” He pouted.

Dream huffed, glancing at George who shot him a glare in response, “Right, let’s just get back to our other bus, we have another *long* bus ride left to sit and talk about our ‘*feelings*’ and whoever’s fault this all is.”

“Can’t wait.” George grumbled, crossing his arms.

“Well *I* can if the entire bus ride is gonna look like *this* . You guys are going to have to *beg* for my forgiveness, you really hurt my feelings, you know.”

George’s shoulders sagged, “I’m actually sorry, Sapnap. Leaving you behind was... not cool.”

Despite the lackluster apology, Sapnap felt a sob build up in the back of his throat. It was dumb. He shouldn’t be crying. That was the shitiest apology of all time. *But it was the only apology I ever got for being abandoned.* Sad feelings sucked. If this conversation was about to get serious, he might actually cry, and that would be *so* lame.

“He has such a way with words.” Dream whispered to Sapnap, snapping him out of his thoughts as he stifled a snicker.

“Psh, I don’t care about *your* opinion,” Sapnap waved George off, using the opportunity to drag himself out of the almost-emotional situation and eliciting an offended gasp from him, “but *Dream* ?! Years of friendship. Gone down the drain because he couldn’t keep his eyes on me only.” He shrugged Dream off his shoulder and began walking away.

“*Rude* , next time we’re not coming back for you,” George rolled his eyes.

“Shut up! Yes we will! Sapnap, don’t listen to him, please, I would *never* leave you behind on purpose.” He ran to catch up to Sapnap, throwing his arm over his shoulder as George trailed behind them.

“I don’t believe you, you’re the worst friend on the *planet*.”

“You’re right, I’m terrible, I’m the worst friend, you should leave *me* behind on a bus, I deserve it.”

“I should. I should leave *both* of you behind. Maybe I’ll go back to camp, they’ll actually want me, unlike you two.”

“They probably won’t,” George muttered.

“George!” Dream and Sapnap cried in unison.

“You’re the reason I got left behind on the bus and now you just come back to roast me? Not fucking cool.”

“Yeah George, just stop talking,” Dream snickered, though nobody could miss the venom leaking into the statement as it caused George to glare hole into the back of his head, “C’mon, he doesn’t even know anyone there,” he continued, turning back to Sapnap, “they all love you, okay?”

“*Duh*, but it doesn’t matter! My own questmates *hate* me.” Sapnap sniffled dramatically, putting a hand to his forehead in a wounded fashion.

“That’s not *true*, Sapnap, we both love you so much, right George?”

“I *never* said that,” he replied, putting his hands up defensively.

“Just say yes.” Dream hissed.

“*No.* ”

“Whatever, fuck George, all my homies hate George,” Dream t’sked, pulling Sapnap closer to him, “He doesn’t matter, *I* love you, Sapnap.”

Sapnap’s face broke out in a shit-eating grin, “You promise?”

“I promise.” Dream replied solemnly, not noticing the triumphant smirk until it was too late.

“I KNEW it!” Sapnap shrieked, pumping his fist in the air, “The prophecy never lies! *You’re* the one who’s in love with me! We’re the lovers, Dream, I accept your true love’s demands, kiss me!” He grabbed Dream’s face with both his hands and brought it closer to his.

“You’re such an *idiot* ,” Dream wheezed, tearing Sapnap’s arms away from him.

“Don’t deny your true love’s demands, Dream,” Sapnap whined, now being the one to chase Dream to the next stop, “We were meant to be! It’s destiny!” He flung himself into the other demigod, the two nearly tumbling into the street from the force.

“We’ll be destined to get hit by a fucking truck if you don’t be careful!”

“And I’ll be destined to drag both your bodies back to camp,” George muttered.

“That’s true, George isn’t strong enough to carry us back, it wouldn’t be fair to him if I got us into a car accident.”

“Yeah *that’s* why we shouldn’t get hit by a truck, we have to be considerate towards George.”

“Duh, why else? Wouldn’t you want to spend eternity with me in Elysium,” Sapnap batted his lashes at Dream, puckering his lips.

“If I had to spend it with *you* it’d be more like Tartarus.”

“Didn’t you *just* confess your love to me? What’s going on here? What happened to that?”

“Ugh, how far is the next stop, you guys are *gross*,” George groaned.

“What, are you jealous of our love? Cuz we’re *so* in love right now. You’re third-wheeling and it’s embarrassing.”

“You’re right, I even got left behind on the bus when I fell asleep— Oh wait! That was you.”

“*Wow*, you really had to go and bring *that* up, didn’t you.”

“Girls, stop fighting, you’re both pretty.” Dream interjected, putting his arms up between them.

“You confess your love and now you’re calling me pretty? How could we *not* be the lovers?!”

“It’s probably some sort of godly couple, like... I don’t know, Sapnap *you’re* the one that knows all the drama, who could the lovers be?”



“Oh it could be *anyone*! Everyone’s fucking everyone up there. Just one big fuck pile. No rhyme or rhythm to it. Actually wait, no, that’s just the men plus Aphrodite. The other lady gods are pretty consistent.”

“Good for them, I guess.” George shrugged.

“Yeah, also my dad, but that’s because he’s ugly.”

“Runs in the family.” Dream snorted.

“I KNEW you would say that! You asshole!” Sappnap leaped on top of Dream’s back, throwing punches at the son of Athena.

“Get OFF the bus is near the stop! We have to cross the street NOW!”

Sappnap leaned back and both he and Dream went tumbling onto the pavement.

“I’m gonna go make sure the bus doesn’t leave without us!” George called over his shoulder as he sprinted towards it.

Dream disentangled himself from Sappnap, brushing the dirt off his abomination of an outfit before offering him his hand. Sappnap smiled and took it gratefully, nearly being launched into the air as Dream tugged him with much more force than necessary.

“Are you trying to send me into orbit, dude?!” Sappnap chuckled as he struggled to regain his balance, which proved to be difficult as Dream pulled him into a tight hug, “Wow, I didn’t think your confession was serious,” he joked nervously.

“I know you just wanna brush this whole thing off so I’m gonna let you but I just wanted you to know that I really *am* sorry, okay?” Dream whispered to him, “I would never leave you alone on purpose, I feel so *stupid* for forgetting you, it won’t happen again, not if I can help it.”

Sappnap squeezed him tightly, “It’s okay, man, I know you didn’t mean it. These things just happen sometimes!” *People usually tend to forget unimportant things.* “At least you came back for me, right? You didn’t just *totally* forget about me.”

“Pff, yeah, we only realized you were gone when we were finally on the bus and it already pulled out of the stop and everything and then I tried *talking* to you.” Dream snickered, pulling away from the hug, “Speaking of, we should probably head onto that bus, George can’t keep the driver waiting *that* long.”

“Y-yeah,” Sappnap nodded. *When they were finally on the bus and it already started driving, it took them that long? They only noticed by accident because Dream tried talking to me.* “We should.”

As they approached the bus stop, they spotted a frantic George waving his arms at an underpaid bus driver clearly not in the mood to deal with the manic ravings of some knock-off supreme sporting teen.

“Okay, okay!” George shouted as the other demigods closed in, “they’re not hugging anymore, they’re coming on right now, I swear, *please* Miss!”

“Uh oh,” Dream muttered, as he and Sappnap picked up their pace, “We’re here! We’re here! We’re so sorry!”

The bus driver gave him an unimpressed glance as she shut the doors behind them and sped off to

catch the green light ahead of them. The force sent George toppling into Dream, who threw him off and into Sapnap, who held him in a tight hug.

“Ugh, *ew*,” George grimaced, pushing him off with a snicker.

“Why am *I* *ew* but Dream isn’t?!”

“I’m just built different.” Dream shrugged, swiping their MetroCards for them.

“Built like a *cyclops* is what you are.” Sapnap huffed.

“If *anyone* here is a cyclops it’s George! His dad gave birth to like a whole entire tribe of them!”

The bus driver raised a concerned eyebrow at that statement, glancing in the rearview mirror as they made their way to the back of the bus.

“He *did*?!” George grimaced.

“Yeah! And they’re like cannibals or man eaters or something like that.”

“That sounds so gross.”

“Well they’re your siblings so it makes sense.” Sapnap quipped, earning himself a punch to the shoulder from the son of Poseidon.

“Look who’s talking about ugly relatives! You literally called your *own* dad ugly!”

“Okay that’s *not* fair! Being ugly is, like, half his personality!” Sapnap cried, plopping down into the back row seat. He pretended not to notice how George and Dream took the spots to either side of him, purposely avoiding each other. “He’s like 30% god of the forge, 20% god of getting cheated on by his wife, and 50% god of being ugly!”

“Dude, your dad’s kind of a badass,” Dream piped in.

Sapnap glanced at him with his eyebrows raised high, “How the fuck do you even know what my dad is like?”

“*Welllll*,” Dream sang, “I *may* or may not have met your dad before you got to.”

“You *what*?!” Sapnap shrieked as Dream snickered and George shrank away from him, “*HOW?! That’s so unfair!*”

“He just came and talked to me in my dream last night,” Dream shrugged, leaning back against his hands.

“Why?! What did my dad want to talk to *you* about that he couldn’t tell me?! Or any of his other kids?!”

Dream grimaced nervously, “Uh, he just... wanted to test out his new dream hijacking machine and he didn’t want to fuck it up on any of you?” He tried.

“...Did dad just forget every single one of us fucking existed?”

“Yeeeaah.”

“You’re *kidding*.”

“Dude, I wish, it was fucking embarrassing! I brought you up and he was just like ‘Sapnap who? Why should I know any of your mortal friends?’”

*He didn't even know me when I was mentioned by name? Why am I even surprised?*

*Anyone would want to forget their kids with a son like **you**.*

“D-did he get who I was at the end at least?”

“Uh, I *think* so? He might've just been saying it to get me to shut up. He also said something about fire and as far as I know you aren't planning on bursting into flames anytime soon, right?”

“Right...gotta love the gods, huh?”

“Pff, you got that right.” Dream snorted as he rolled his eyes, turning to the window closest to him as he stared out at the scenery. George seemed to be doing the same beside him.

Sapnap was never one to allow a silent moment to stay that way, however this time he seemed to make an exception as his thoughts bounced around in his mind, loud enough to drown out anything else that might be going on outside.

*Why do I even bother?*

*I already knew dad sucked. I shouldn't feel bad about it. Why do I still feel bad?*

*All the gods are like that, they have a ton of other stuff to worry about, not just their kids. **What a likely cover up so that he could avoid me.***

*Do you really think **you're** important enough for a cover-up? No, this is just a **happy side effect** of it.*

*Why? Why does he hate me so much? Why does everyone leave?*

*It's because of **you**.*

*But I try my best, I always do!*

*Your best isn't **good enough**, you can try as much as you'd like but you still **fail**. You ruin **everything**. Your birth ruined mom's life, your presence delayed this quest, you're probably the reason Dream failed his most important task.*

*Does anyone actually acknowledge me? Do they even know how much I try? Do they know it's not my fault? It's not on purpose...*

*Of course they **don't**. Because it **is** your fault.*

*What if I just disappeared, would anyone notice – **would anyone actually care?***

Sapnap couldn't tell how long he had spent stewing in his thoughts, it seemed as though even time itself didn't care about him. The uncharacteristic silence went unnoticed by his peers, or maybe it did, but they definitely didn't think anything of it. *They'd probably appreciate it, if anything. They were just waiting for me to finally shut up–*

“Sapnap?”

Sapnap glanced up at Dream as the son of Athena nudged his arm, the beginnings of a hopeful smile making its way onto his face. *Was I wrong? Maybe he does care, is he gonna ask if I'm okay? Is he—?*

“We’re here, it’s our stop.”

*Oh.*

“Whoops,” Sapnap joked with a lack of earnest, “looks like I almost held us back again,” he chuckled dryly and lifted himself from his seat. His body felt like a sack of bricks, weighing him down with every step he took.

“At least *this* time you’re being considerate,” George snickered, bumping into his shoulder as they made their way to the back exit, the force catching Sapnap off guard as he allowed himself to fall out the open door.

“Sapnap what are you *doing?!?*” Dream cried, catching the back of his shirt before he plummeted face first onto the pavement, “Did somebody give you something when we left you alone? What’d we say about taking candy from strangers?!?”

“I *didn’t* take any,” Sapnap coughed, straightening his posture, “I’m just... still a little tired.”

“Weren’t you *just* sleeping?” George asked, rolling his eyes as the group began walking towards central park, the entrance being easily spotted as thousands of families congregated around it.

“No, I did that on the *other* bus ride, the one you guys *left* me on.”

“Wait wait wait, so what were you doing on *this* bus ride?! You were completely zoned out, I thought you were sleeping with your eyes open!” George exclaimed.

“No I was just... thinking...” Sapnap trailed off.

“Well *that’s* a first,” Dream snorted, “seriously though, dude, you look *awful* .” He reached over and pressed the back of his hand against Sapnap’s forehead

“Yeah, I thought we’ve been through this already, Sapnap’s ugly, haha,” he drawled.

“*No* I mean like *actually* awful. Worse than usual. You’re not warm or anything, George can he drink your sword or something? Are you dehydrated?”

“No! I’m just tired, okay?”

“Sapnap, you’re skin is *literally* turning grey.” George piped in, pointing at Sapnap’s hand.

“It’s *not* and I’m *fine*, stop pretending to be all concerned about me,” he spat.

“We’re not pretending *anything* , stop being a drama queen,” Dream huffed, rolling his eyes, “George is right, you look like a fucking vampire.”

“No vampires are supposed to be hot, he looks more like a zombie.”

“What *ever*, you guys are acting like you’re my *parents* or something.”

“Don’t disrespect me, young man, I am your *father*.” Dream declared, lowering his voice as he puffed his chest out.

*Yeah, well, you both abandoned me so that checks out.*

“Stop.”

“Don’t speak to you father that way.” George snickered.

“Your mother’s right, Sapnap—”

“What? Why am I the *mother*?!”

*Because she abandoned me too! It was a two for two package deal.*

“Because *I’m* the father.”

“Aren’t you the one who does the cooking and the cleaning?!” George cried out, gesturing towards the broom at Dream’s side.

“Wow George, way to be *sexist*.” Dream snorted while rolling his eyes, “Maybe I just don’t conform to *gender roles*, have you thought of that?”

“Oh shut *up*, you’re just trying to make fun of me!”

The three demigods continued making their way towards the center of Central Park, several families glancing up at them as their conversation grew progressively louder. A single mother gave Dream and George the stink eye as their spat woke up her crying baby, though she might as well have been staring at a brick wall for the effect it had on them.

“Why is being a woman an insult to you, huh George? Can you tell me that?”

“It’s *not*, but you’re saying it to annoy me, because you’re *annoying*.” He scoffed.

A middle-aged man shoved Sapnap as he walked by with a huff, pushing him aside, grumbling something about ‘disrespectful kids’ and ‘broom carriers’ under his breath.

“If *anyone’s* annoying here, it’s you.” Dream snorted, bumping George’s shoulder with far too much force to be considered playful, causing him to stumble to the side and nearly fall into the elderly couple on the bench beside them.

He quickly jumped away from them, stammering an apology as they laughed and waved him off, smiling at each other knowingly as George launched himself back at Dream in retaliation, failing to move him even an inch.

“As *if*, you’re the most annoying one here! Everything you say and do is to annoy me. You’ve never even *tried* to not be annoying because you’ll just *die* if you do.”

As they left the couple behind, Sapnap could’ve sworn he heard one of them say, ‘Doesn’t that remind you of when we used to argue, Perce?’

*Why does everyone think they’re a fucking couple? **Because you’re so detached from them you look like a sad little third wheel.***

He looked back towards his friends, Dream’s eye twitching in irritation at George’s quip.

“Well why *does* everything I do annoy you so much anyways? It shouldn’t annoy you, you’re just being sensitive again.”

George froze in his tracks, staring at Dream with wide eyes at the retort.

“Are you *serious*? ‘Again’?!”

Dream inhaled deeply and pinched the bridge of his nose, “Great,” he sneered, “Round two of this bullshit.”

“What do you *mean* ‘round two of this bullshit’?! *You* brought it up!” George shrieked, causing half the park to cover their ears and turn to stare at their mismatched group.

*Brought what up?*

“Well not on *purpose*.”

“Okay then I’ll just *not on purpose* be mad at you again, you jerk! I thought we were getting somewhere!”

“We are! To the underworld! But if you mean in this *conversation* then no, not at all, because you’re being *dramatic*!”

*You’re one to talk Dream.*

“I am being PERFECTLY reasonable right now, the *dramatic* one here is the guy that won’t just admit that he’s been an asshole to me this whole time!”

“I *apologized already*!”

“That was *not* an apology.”

“I said sorry! What else could an apology be?!”

*Maybe showing remorse for your actions? Promising to never let it happen again? Maybe making sure you don’t leave your friend stranded and **alone** .*

“Admitting that you were *wrong*.”

“But I *wasn’t*.”

*Maybe he wasn’t.*

“The dye from your stupid hoodie must’ve leaked into your *fucking brain* and killed the normal part of it because if you *seriously* can’t tell what the problem is then I don’t know what to tell you.”

*Maybe... **I’m the problem?***

“Then don’t tell me *anything*! That’s all I’ve been asking for this whole time! Just stop talking about it and move on!”

“I can’t move on when you keep bringing it up!”

*It’s **not** a coincidence that this **always** happens around me.*

“When did I bring it up?!”

“JUST NOW!”

*Just say something, Sapnap, you never have trouble talking. **You never shut up** . Why do you stay quiet when your **annoying habits** can finally be useful for fucking **once**.*

"No you just *interpreted it* that way."

"Okay then if I just *interpreted it* wrong, maybe you could explain to me what you *actually* meant!"

*Guys, please stop arguing.*

"It doesn't matter."

"It *does*."

"You're getting caught up on little details again."

*Please stop.*

"Oh? What was the *other* little detail I got caught up on? Was it my **dead brother** ? Hm? Is that the *teeny tiny* detail that I was caught up on the first time?"

"*Again* with the dead relative? Wow, you really *are* a Katara kinnie."

*Stop.*

"Wh— **what** ?! Ex-cuse me?!" George spluttered, "No, I'm hallucinating, you did *not* just say that."

"And if I *did*? What are you gonna do?! *Cry* about it?! Gonna pick up a river and drown me in it?!"

**STOP.**

"I can *not* believe—!"

"CAN YOU GUYS **STOP**?!" Sapnap screeched, causing any bystanders who had yet to pay any attention to them to stare at the new outburst, "WHAT IS **WRONG** WITH YOU GUYS?!"

Dream and George stood frozen in place. They glanced amongst themselves as Sapnap's tears threatened to fall down his face, pooling in his eyes as they burned in the back of his sockets and blurred his vision.

He took in a shaky breath and swallowed his tears, willing them to stay back. His fists were balled at his side, the nails digging into his skin, as though he believed that if he clenched them tightly enough they could hold together the broken and torn relationships that seemed to follow him wherever he went.

Dream took a hesitant step towards him, "Sap, I—"

"Just *stop* , okay?" He cried, keeping his eyes shut, "I just need you two to work together for *one stupid quest* and then you can go back to hating each other." *Just like how everyone else hates me.*

"I—"

"Just *one* quest! And then I'll never ask you for anything again!" *Leave me behind again after this is done, for all I care, just let us get through this one thing together. Just one thing.*

Dream reached out a hand towards him before reconsidering and letting it drop. He glanced between George and his friend, before sighing in defeat.

"Fine, but only for you, Sapnap." Dream huffed, holding his hand out towards George, without making eye contact with him, "I'm sorry."

"It's okay," George mumbled, taking his hand and shaking it awkwardly.

Sapnap cracked open his eyes, his shoulders relaxing at the sight of his questmates finally making peace.

"Are you going to apologize now?" Dream asked, raising an eyebrow.

*No. No. Not a-fucking-gain.*

"What? No! I don't have anything to apologize for!" George cried, pulling his hand out of Dream's grasp.

"Oh *really*?!"

"Yes really!"

"You guys seriously couldn't even make it for FIVE SECONDS?"

George winced guiltily at Sapnap before glancing back up at Dream's smug face.

"I'm waiting."

George closed his eyes and took in a deep breath, the tides of a nearby lake beginning to ripple with small waves, "Okay. I'm *sorry*."

"I forgive you."

"Finally." Sapnap sighed in relief, "Let's just go to the entrance now and both of you can stop bringing whatever this is back up. Just forget about it, okay?" *I know you're really good at that... Or maybe I just wasn't important enough to remember.*

"Yessir." Dream declared in a mock salute, "Forward march!"

The group trudged silently down the wide paved pathways of central park, leaving their audience behind as they got closer to their destination.

"What are we even looking for?" George asked as they strayed off the pathway, ignoring the '*Do not step on the grass*' signs in their way, "Is there just gonna be a random door in the middle of nowhere?"

"Are you dumb?" Dream scoffed.

"It's a good question!" He cried defensively, "You guys have the weird mist thing, if it can block out swords why can't it block out doors too?!"

"Because..." Dream paused at the legitimately fair point before shaking his head, "It just doesn't, okay? It's not a random door, it's a certain rock with inscriptions and stuff."

"We have to climb up a rock to get to the underworld? Isn't that counterintuitive?"



"Oh my gods," Dream groaned as he pinched the bridge of his nose, "please, for the love of Olympus, stop talking."

"Answer my questions!"

"No! We're not climbing up anything, there's a certain rock wall that if you play it a tune it'll open the doors of the underworld for you."

"...you're joking."

"I'm dead serious."

"What does that—?! Wait. *Stop.*" George rolled his eyes and slapped his forehead at the sudden, incorrect, realization, "that was the worst joke I've ever heard."

"Well *you* clearly haven't looked in the mirror lately." Sapnap muttered, rolling his eyes and crossing his arms.

"OOHHH! Roasted!" Dream whooped, "Get 'im Sap!"

"Roasted huh?" Sapnap spat, unable to stop himself as the words tumbled from his mouth, "Just like those gifts you got for your mom?"

As soon as the words left his mouth, Sapnap regretted them instantly. His eyes widened as he clamped a hand over his mouth, glancing nervously at Dream.

The cheers of the other demigod had cut off abruptly as his shoulders sagged, "Ouch, dude," he chuckled half heartedly, clutching the hilt of his sword tightly, "that was kinda harsh."

*Fuck. Fuck. What's wrong with me?!*

*This is why they hate you.*

George glanced between Dream and Sapnap before clearing his throat awkwardly, "So, uh?" He tried unsuccessfully to somewhat lighten the mood, "musical rock door?"

"Y-yeah, that's what we're looking for here," Sapnap stammered, he avoided Dream's gaze, although, unbeknownst to him, Dream did the same thing.

"That's so random, why?"

"Uh, no it's not?" Dream piped up, jumping at the opportunity to demonstrate his in-depth knowledge of the Greek world to George, "It's the Door of Orpheus, have you not heard of it?"

"Why in the fuck would I have ever heard of it?"

"Right," Dream mocked, "I keep forgetting you're clueless," He huffed, turning to inspect the rocks beside him.

"Because you're not leaving me any clues to pick up!" George rolled his eyes.

"Well, whatever, Orpheus was this dude whose wife died and he wanted her back. He wasn't really good at anything except playing music so he turned his life into a musical and through the power of love and music he just got everything he asked for from Hades and Persephone."

"So he got his wife back?"

"Nah, he ended up looking at her because he thought she fell behind, which breached the one fucking Hades had given him: *Don't look at the wife until you guys are out.*" He kicked at the rock wall as it refused to share its secrets.

"Pff, well that sucks."

"Not as much as it sucks to be here with you guys." Sappnap snorted, quickly clamping his hand over his mouth.

*What am I saying ?! Of course my mouth moves faster than my brain. It always has. I never fucking **think** and then I wonder why I lose everyone.*

"Sap, are you okay?" Dream frowned, his eyebrows knitting together.

"Perfect." He spat, "I-I mean, yeah? Just don't worry about me."

*He wasn't gonna worry about you anyways, **idiot**.*

"That's obviously a lie."

"Yeah, as much as I hate to agree with Dream, he's right. You look *really* bad."

"Okay I **get it** already! I'm ugly and gross and horrible to look at! Haha! You guys are *comedians!* Real performers! If only you'd perform as well at things that were actually *useful*, instead of wasting all that energy *hating me* !"

The other two demigods stared at him with wide eyes as he gasped.

"I-I'm sorry, I don't know where that came from, I swear—!"

"Sappnap we don't hate you." Dream said softly, "I'm sorry if we made you feel that way."

"~~I don't think~~ you do!" He cried.

*What the fuck is going on?*

*The world isn't letting you **lie** to them. You **do** know they hate you. You **know**.*

"We-we really don't." George stammered, "I didn't mean what I said before, about you looking awful, I just meant that you look sick! Like you don't feel well!"

Sappnap clamped his jaw shut, not trusting it to cooperate with him.

*Good. Keep your mouth **shut** . Save them the headache and yourself the embarrassment.*

He nodded slowly at George's excuse.

"Sap, if you're not feeling up to all of this maybe we should go back to camp—"

"So that you can leave me behind **again**?!"

*Stop it! STOP!*

"N-no! Forget I said anything, let's get back to finding the rock, okay? You can stay."

**For now.**

"Yes! Let's do that!" George exclaimed, "Uh, what exactly am I looking for?"

"Anything that doesn't look like it's part of a normal rock" Dream replied, quickly getting back into rock-hunter mode.

"Is it gonna be a huge, hard to miss thing or do I need a telescope."

"*Telescope?!?*" Dream slapped his forehead at George's response.

"Oh my god, nevermind."

"No, please! Tell me! I'm *dying* to know how a *telescope* is going to help you search for things up close."

"Stop with the dead jokes!"

*They're getting along so well when I'm not **in the way**.*

"You'll have to pry them away from my cold, dead hands."

"Don't give me ideas." George grumbled, scanning the same piece of bark for the fifth time, "How are we even playing the song again?"

"Well we could whistle, sing, hum, I also brought a flute so Sap—"

"Wait, if it's not anything magical why can't we just play it from like a phone or something?"

"Because we don't *have* phones, George." Dream scoffed matter-of-factly.

"You're joking."

"We *can* 't have phones. We're supposed to be all secret and safe, electronics amplify our 'scent' and that attracts even more monsters and enemies."

"So you guys don't have any electronics at *all* ? Not even, like, radios? Or something for playing music?"

"Pfft, even if we *were* allowed to use them , where the fuck would I get a radio from?! You think I keep one in my pocket? Here! Let me just ask Apollo to rain down a choir from above! Maybe he'll throw me down a lyre! or even a boombox! I'm sure he's feeling *very* generous right about now. C'mon Apollo! Show me the money!"

"*Okay* I get it! No radio!"

"Obviously not!"

The sound of snapping branches from above cut off the conversation as a foreign object seemingly tumbled out of the sky, smashing through twigs and leaves as it careened to the ground.

"What—?"

"Sapnap look out!" Dream cried, tackling him out of the way just as the object crashed to the ground in the place where he was standing, bursting into a million pieces on impact

"What kind of squirrels do you have here?!" George shrieked.

"That's not a fucking *squirrel* you *idiot*!" Dream yelled, "At least I don't think it is." He added quietly.

The hunk of scraps made a growling, scraping sound before finally coughing through its near death experience and playing a dramatic music track.

"Oh are you *kidding* me right now?!" Dream cried, glaring at the sky as he threw his hands up.

George crinkled his eyebrows, "What the fuck is—AGH?"

He threw his arms up to shield his eyes from the bright, shining spotlights that had cut him off with their sudden appearance, illuminating two tall figures as they stood back to back in a dramatic pose.

"What the—?"

"How did they install a spotlight here?!" Dream spluttered.

"THAT'S your issue—?!"

The two figures chuckled, turning the attention back to them as smoke began to fill the embarrassing excuse of a forest that central park had to offer.

"Prepare for trouble!" The first one called.

"And make it double!" The second chanted.

"To enact onto the world our devastation!"

"To destroy all peoples within each nation!"

"To denounce the evils of peace and love!"

"To extend our reach to Olympus above!"

"Phobos!"

"And Deimos!"

"The League of Minor Gods blasts off at the speed of light!"

"Surrender now or prepare to fight!"

The forest stood still as the twins finished their chant, the spotlights retreating and the smoke evaporating in an instant.

"So which will it be?!" Deimos demanded.

"Uh, who the hell are these people?" George grimaced, staring at their edgy punk attire.

"Who the hell are *WE*?!" Phobos echoed, the studs on his leather jacket threatening to blind the group as he took a step forward, "Only the coolest most *epic* sons of Ares to exist ever!"

"Yeah don't you know anything? What've you got air instead of brain cells or something?"

"These guys are supposed to be related to Technoblade?" George hissed, inching closer to Dream and Sapnap, who were still sitting in the dirt.

"Yeah, but the two of them combined don't even come *close* to being half as smart as him." Dream muttered.

"What the fuck'd you say about us?!" Phobos demanded.

"Respect your Uncles, IQ man!"

"Yeah! At least your *other* little friend knows his place!" Phobos sneered, pointing his baseball bat in Sapnap's direction.

"I—!"

*Don't say a fucking word you **embarrassment** . Dream's the leader, George's a Big Three kid, do you think you can come **close** to being able to stand on the same ground as them? Let alone a **God** ?*

Deimos red eyes burned with a sadistic glee as he grinned at him, showing off a pair of cracked and ruined teeth to match his scarred face, "attaboy."

"What the fuck are you guys doing?!" Dream demanded, wrapping an arm around Sapnap's waist and hoisting him up so that they could stand and face the Green Day fanboys on their feet.

Phobos leaned forward to look Sapnap in the eyes, flicking the shaking demigods bandana with a snicker, "Copying my look huh? I got me one of these too, you see it?"

"Y—"

*Don't open your fucking mouth. **Just nod** . You're not even wanted here anyways, just **be thankful** somebody is looking at you for **once** .*

He nodded and gulped.

"Cept you make it look stupid, right?"

He nodded again and Dream tightened his grip around him, "Stop it." He hissed, "Don't let them push you around."

*But that's all I'm good for.*

"That's all he's good for though, isn't it?" Deimos snickered, "Why else would two big guys like you be walking around with a guy like him?"

*Why?*

"Why don't you mind your fuckin business?" Dream spat.

*He won't even answer. It's the truth.*

"But this *is* our business!" Phobos grinned, "Or rather *you're* our business."

"Being bored and wanting to fuck around with us doesn't count as this being your business." Dream sneered.

"If we were bored we would be doing *much* more interesting things than bothering our annoying nephew, Poseidon's son, and their useless friend." Phobos rolled his eyes.

"So then why *are* you here," he asked through gritted teeth.

"Because you want to go to the underworld and we can't allow that."

"What? Why the fuck not?! This entrance has *always* been free to enter! What kind of bullshit is that?!"

"Bullshit or no that's the way things are." Deimos shrugged, "You want in? You have to go through *us* first."

"Gladly!" He spat, the arm supporting Sapnap disappearing from around his waist as it instead reached for the broom-sword that lay abandoned on the ground.

*Abandoned. I guess that's me now instead.*

His knees felt shaky. He had to lie down.

"Hey woah! Chill out dude!" Phobos cried, putting his hands up defensively, "It's not gonna be *that* typa fight!"

"That means you too, shorty in blue, put your elongated water balloon down!" Deimos added, nodding at George who had somehow managed to unsheathe his sword and hold it in the right direction without injuring himself.

He dropped the sword and it landed on his knee, dipping as it spilled off and clattered to the ground.

"That was really disturbing," Deimos grimaced.

"What 'typa' fight is this gonna be then," Dream demanded, still pointing his sword at the twins.

"Weapons down hombre, it's just an easy breezy challenge! Baby mode!" Phobos assured him, pressing his finger down on the blade to lower it.

"Baby mode my *ass*!"

"Unless your ass is your biggest fear then I'm gonna have to say *no* on that one."

"What?"

"The challenge is to pass through one of our specially designed, custom made, individually engineered fear sequences!" Deimos announced, waving a pair of jazz hands for emphasis.

"Fear sequences?" George hissed.

"That's what I said!" Deimos nodded as he crouched by the shattered boombox laying on the grass beside him. The moment he laid his hands on the hunk of scrap it transformed into a war hammer, engraved with several depictions of battles and conquests, all in a gaudy shade of red to contrast the black metal.

"Succeed, and we'll allow you to pass! Fail, and know that your soul will be trapped in a never-ending fear sequence which slowly tears away at your mental stability until all that's left is a hollow shell of your former self!" Phobos added eagerly.

*What even is left anyways? What's left of me isn't worth it. There's hardly any risk. And I'm so tired. The grass is nice. So's the dirt. I belong with it. That's all I am.*

*I don't care. Just do it.*

"Like hell we're accepting that! Fuck right off! We'll figure something else out, c'mon guys, we're *leaving*." Dream spat as he began stomping away from the site.

"Eh, *wrong*," Deimos snickered, mimicking a game show buzzer, "your dead weight already accepted the challenge! He can't leave till he's finished, and since you three are a package deal that means that neither can you."

"*What?!*" He swiveled around, glancing at George who still stood silently in his spot.

"You really should be taking better care of your teammates, Cream. You can't afford another failure."

"Shut up! Where's Sapnap?!"

His eyes darted around the area frantically, shifting from place to place until they finally locked onto Sapnap who laid on a mound in the dirt. His skin had lost all it's color and his eyes had a glassy look to them as he stared off into nothingness.

"What'd you do to him, you bastards?!" Dream shrieked, dropping his sword as he made a lunge for Sapnap.

"Ah ah ah!" Phobos t'sked, grabbing Dream before he could touch him, "You're definitely not allowed to interfere here."

"Get off of me!" He screamed, clawing at the arm around him as he stared at what looked like the corpse of his best friend.

He just needed to check. He just needed to make sure. He needed to know that there was still a chance, that Sapnap was still breathing.

His friend's body made no attempts at getting closer to him, his chest lying still and unmoving as the glazed over eyes seemed to stare into his very soul.

"PLEASE!"

"Only if you accept our challenge." Deimos retorted, swinging his war hammer around in playful twirls.

"I accept! We accept!"

"What about you, little boy blue, we need the confirmation here."

Dream's head snapped back to look at George, a silent plea in his eyes.

*Please. I'm so sorry, George.*

George gulped, his eyes darting to Sapnap's cold figure before looking back at Dream, who looked to be on the verge of tears.

*I understand, I'm sorry.*

"Y-yes. O-of course." He managed to stammer, clenching his fists tightly to hide how much they were shaking.

“Excellent! Good luck boys!”

"Wait! But Sapnap—!"

Phobos snapped his fingers and the park disappeared.

#### Chapter End Notes

We'll try to have some sort of semblance of an upload schedule in the future but I don't want to make anymore empty promises for you guys lol, hope you enjoyed the late update!



# Mike and Yikes || George

## Chapter Notes

Oh boy... uh, hello again guys! It's been a while, hasn't it? Haha...

First things first a quick !TW! For multiple mentions of death, not incredibly graphic, but very much there.

Second things second, sorry doesn't even begin to describe how we feel about this delay, honestly, we didn't mean to have you guys waiting so long on this chapter. We were all just really swamped with work from school, and it didn't help that this chapter was one of those annoying chapters that just didn't come together as easily as it was supposed to.

While we cannot promise any consistency with uploads, I think we're way past that at this point, we can TRY to promise that we won't make you wait nearly two months for another update like this ever again.

Thank you so much for your patience and please enjoy the long awaited update!

(Also, a special thanks to ssaturnsays here on the archive for reaching out and helping us with this chapter! They did some great work on the final fear scene so check 'em out if you'd like!)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The forest floor was enveloped in a dense blanket of powdery snow picturesquely reminiscent of a cold December night. Woodland animals, both big and small, sought after shelter as they sequestered themselves into their burrows, their dens, their dugouts struggling for a morsel of warmth from the unforgiving wintry chills. The howling wind rattled boisterously as it smacked the decaying remains of a lifeless branch against the foggy panes of a small wooden cabin. Nestled among the pines, its inhabitants were unperturbed by the hostile chills of Mother Nature as an intense glow emanating from the blazing logs of a worn down hearth warmed the quaint abode.

Inside the cabin, one could hardly turn a corner without being ambushed by a messy string of golden tinsel or hastily strewn fairy lights. The walls, the floor, and even the ceiling appeared to have been pilfered and reappropriated, copyright be damned, directly from a Christmas edition of a home magazine. Somebody had clearly gotten *way* too excited with the decorations, and, if all that red white and green wasn't enough to indicate what holiday it was, the giant pine tree in the middle of the living room would've definitely done the trick. It's star-crowned head bowed over from the sheer weight of the shimmering ornaments. Nonetheless, it wouldn't have been able to stand completely upright as the small cabin constrained the massive pine due to its ginormous height.

Above the fireplace hung four giant stockings, if you could even call them that, as the fabric had completely lost its shape due to the number of toys and trinkets that were stuffed into them. The material held strong, however, despite the baubles threatening to tear the stocking at its seams. Moving past the lumpy battlefield, four names had been intricately sewn into them with a sturdy white thread.

'Mummy', 'Daddy', 'Michael', and—

“Georgie?”

The nine year old boy jumped in his seat as his nickname was called from behind him.

Turning around, George spotted a bleary-eyed teen. Four years his elder, the boy stood unmoving between the hall that separated the kitchen from the living room. His golden hair stuck out in all directions, recently matted from sleep, and his blue eyes, which usually emanated a calming warmth, now shot a questioning look at the sheepish boy.

“Uh,” George paused, staring back towards his stepbrother, “Hi Mike,” he waved apprehensively, sliding off the couch as he did so.

“George, what’ve mom and dad told you about staying up so late?” Mike huffed, rubbing the sleep out his eyes.

“That I’d get in trouble...” George mumbled.

“And?”

“And that I’ll stay short if I keep staying up late.”

“That’s right,” Mike smiled, holding back a laugh, a light chuckle escaping his mouth as he failed to do so, “let’s get back to bed, shorty.” Putting his hands on his hips, he nodded back towards their shared bedroom.

George pouted and glared daggers at Mike, folding his arms across his chest as he dragged his feet on over to him.

“Why *are* you staying up so late anyways?” Mike asked, eyeing the boy carefully as he begrudgingly walked past him.

“I-It’s n-nothing!” George stammered, suddenly taking keen interest in the cabin’s wooden varnish as his eyes fell to the floor and he stood frozen in place, “I just wasn’t tired, that’s all!”

Mike's shoulders sagged as he let out a small huff. He walked over to his stepbrother and placed a comforting hand on his shoulder, squatting down to meet him at eye-level.

George glanced up, his eyes meeting his brother's warm smile, “Were you planning on waiting for Santa Claus all night?”

"He's called Father Christmas," George grumbled as he shrugged Mike's hand off his shoulder, red-faced at having been found out.

"Nuh uh, that's such a dumb name," Mike snickered, standing back up to his full height.

" *You* have a dumb name!" George retorted, stomping his feet.

"Why would you name Santa Claus after the holiday? That makes no sense! He was an actual guy, you know?"

"Wh— of course he's an actual guy! And he's coming soon, and his name is Father Christmas."

"Okay, you can call him whatever you want, *I'm* gonna call him by his real name." Mike rolled his eyes and crossed his arms in a playful manner.

"Well, he's gonna be getting here soon anyways," George justified, crossing his own arms in an attempt to prove his point, "so we'll just *ask him* what his real name is."

Mike stared off into space apprehensively before turning back to George. "Fine, deal. But if you fall asleep while waiting, I'm not waking you up. I'll talk to him all on my own and *you* won't get to know the truth."

"You're such a liar!" George ran towards Mike and gave him a shove, but Mike being the older, and much taller, brother, simply wrapped an arm around George and Gave his head a noogie.

"Ugh," George cried as he attempted to get Mike off of him, "that's not gonna happen! If anything, *you'll* fall asleep first; you're always sleeping in the afternoon like an old person, or singing old songs like an old person, or telling old stories like an old person— you're basically an old man! You'll probably *die* before Father Christmas even gets here because of how old you are!" As Mike tried stifling back a laugh, George managed to break free from his brother's grasp.

"Maybe I'm such an old guy because I *am* Santa Claus! Betcha hadn't thought of that, huh?"

"Nuh uh, he's supposed to be nice and give the perfect presents, I saw you wrapping the ones under this tree! You put socks in one of them! That's *not* perfect."

"Maybe I put socks for *you* because you've been mean to me all year and this is my revenge."

" *No* ." George considered shoving his brother once again but knowing how that turned out last time instead decided to give him the ol' stink eye.

"It's the truth, Georgie, I'm Santa and you got socks this year for being a meanie."

"No! That's not true, you're *such* a liar! I bet he's gonna give you *coal* this year for pretending to be him and being a *liar* !"

"Nah," Mike grinned, enjoying messing around with George's childish naiveté more than he would've initially thought, "I wouldn't give *myself* coal, that would be dumb."

"Stop saying you're him! You're not!"

"C'mon Georgie, think about it! You were sitting here all alone waiting for him, and then all of a sudden who appears? Me! It just makes sense."

" *No* , if you're him then why aren't you out delivering presents around the world, huh?"

"Because I have to hang out with my annoying little brother, duh. See, now it's all your fault nobody's getting presents, that's why you get socks."

George pursed his lips, considering his brother's nonsense for a moment, "Well, if you're *really* him then that means if we stay here all night nobody else should show up."

"Yup! So back to bed with you—"

" *No!* " George stood his ground, "I'm gonna stay up all night and when he *does* get here I'll be right and you'll be wrong!"

"So you're saying if I stay with you and nobody gets here that means I'm right and I prove I'm Santa?"

"You prove that you're *Father Christmas* ."

"My name is *Santa* ."

"Your name is Mike!"

"N— I mean *yeah* but it's also Santa Claus, not Father Christmas."

"You're wrong."

"Fine! I'll prove it! We'll stay here all night!"

"Fine!"

" *Fine* !"

"Fine!"

George plopped back onto the sofa and crossed his arms over his chest, staring at the flashing lights and the brown colors ahead of him.

Mike glanced at him and then back at his room before sighing.

"If we're gonna be staying here all night we should at *least* get some blankets, I don't wanna freeze."

"Oh!" George exclaimed, coming up with a bright idea, "let's add more wood to light up the fireplace!"

"Absolutely not," Mike raised an arm and gestured around the room, "do you see all these decorations?! That's a fire hazard!"

" *You're* a fire hazard."

"That... doesn't make sense."

"Yeah it does, you just don't get it," George rolled his eyes, "We'll be *really* careful!"

"I don't know, George...."

"There's snow all *over* outside! If the fire gets out of control, we could just throw some snow at it and it'll go out! Snow has water in it, did you know?"

" *Yes* I knew that—"

"So then what's the problem? Fire time!" George cried, throwing his hands up in glee.

"NO!"

" *Please* , please please please please please ple—"

"OKAY okay, fine, I-i'll let it up," Mike gulped, "but if anything bad happens, I get to say I told you so."

"Deal!"

Mike grabbed a log and a butane lighter with a shaky hand as George bounced up and down excitedly on the couch beside the fireplace.

"Are you *sure* you want more fire? Mom and dad left the fireplace with just enough wood to keep the house warm. Maybe we can just bring out a bunch of blankets and—"

"*Ugh*, that's *boring* !"

Mike's shoulders sagged, "Right, boring. More fire it is, then."

He grabbed a fistful of newspaper strips from a basket beside the fireplace and wrapped them around one of the logs. He flicked the lighter on, setting the pages ablaze before quickly chucking the log into the hearth with a yelp. The strips around the log burned to a black crisps as the log clattered into the hearth without a single scorch mark. As it lay in the embers of the fire set hours ago by George's stepfather, it appeared more so to have been warmed up by the remains of previous burning logs than by Mike's poor attempt at arson.

"You can't do it like that!" George scoffed, folding his arms across his chest. "The fire will *never* grow that way, Robert said so when I asked him yesterday."

"Well" Mike stood up and feigned his way towards their parent's bedroom, "maybe we can wake up *Robert* and ask *him* to feed the fire for us, huh?" He narrowed his eyes, blowing on his fingers dramatically despite the fire never having come close to them.

"No, I could do it! He told me *everythin* g I need to know!"

"I don't think so."

"Well, you don't know anything, we have to put smaller branches on it so they'll catch on fire and then the big ones will catch on fire too! It's harder for them to burn because they're so fat!"

"Fatter things burn faster though."

"Nuh-uh! They're bigger so it takes them longer, don't be a dummy! Here, I'll show you." George jumped off the sofa and made a beeline for the pile of branches beside the fireplace. He began heaving them into the hearth in anticipation for the bigger logs.

"Don't show me *anything* ," Mike reprimanded, unknowingly moving closer towards the fire. Fulfilling his body's subconscious desire for warmth. "I already lit a fire like I wasn't supposed to, I don't want us to get into even *more* trouble."

"You're such a party pooper. Who poops in his pants. I'm not listening to you."

"Well, you have to, because I'm the adult and I'm in charge."

"No you're not!" George cried out as the fire before him began to roar quietly, "you cried when you accidentally drank alcohol a few days ago because you thought you would go to *jail* ! Adults don't cry over going to *jail* !"

"Yes they *do* !"

"No they *don't* ! Which means you're not the boss of me, and I can do what I want!" George declared, "And I wanna do this!"

In one swift movement he tossed the last few branches and grabbed a log from the pile, giggling as he heaved it over his head and into the hearth before his brother could so much as turn to react.

"George no—!"

*His cries were cut off as a wall of flames bursted from out of the fireplace. Pushing George back and throwing him against the coffee table, they engulfed the entirety of Mike's figure.*

George's horrified shrieks, combined with his brother's screams of agony, filled the small wooden cabin in a cacophony of noise. Mike doubled over, the skin melting off his body to reveal muscle and bone as the fire began to leap off his form and spread out towards the Christmas decorations that haphazardly littered the room. Holding out a hand out to George, the younger boy scrambled back, putting as much distance as possible between himself and the charred and mangled form of his brother.

"Why didn't you *listen* to me?!" Mike rasped, choking on tears and smoke as the flames continued to spread, traveling across the strings of tinsel that circled the cabin.

"I-I'm sorry! I didn't think—!"

"This is *all your fault* George! It's *all your fault* !" Mike spat, the flesh sliding off his face, exposing a charred skull underneath.

"No... this isn't real, this— this can't be real!" George cried, clambering to his feet and stumbling towards the door, screaming in pain as he grabbed the burning knob and pushed the door outwards.

The Christmas tree behind him made a groaning sound as it collapsed on top of his brother's burning body, sending another wave of flames across the house. George bursted out of the door and into the cold winter night as the fire nipped at his heels. With a strangled cry, he collapsed onto the snowy ground, scooping his hands into the substance and throwing it at the now raging bonfire that was once his cabin, desperately trying to put out the flames.

"Please, *please* ," he wailed, "S-snow has water, it can put out the fire, it *can* , it can put it OUT!"

*It can't. It can't bring them back. It can't bring him back.*

*This is all my fault...*

-----

"Don't go too far now, boys!"

"Don't worry mom, we won't!" Mike called back over his shoulder as he and George skated further away from the lake's edge.

"We're *definitely* going too far," George cackled as he began gliding backwards, facing the shrinking figures of his parents. They waved towards him and he waved back.

Mike slowed down, sparing a glance at his mom and dad before turning back to George. "Y-you think so?"

"Psh, no!" George began to speed up, "there's no such thing as 'too far'!"

"George!" Mike hissed, skates scraping against the ice as he came to a screeching stop, "there *definitely is* such a thing as 'too far'!"

"You're being *such* a baby," George rolled his eyes as he skated around Mike, twirling and spinning with reckless abandon as he did so. "C'mon," he urged him, grabbing his hands and forcing his brother to come along, "it'll be fun-!"

“*NO !*” Mike tugged at his arms, but it was a futile attempt, “I want to go back! I changed my mind! Skating is for ice rinks only, not for lakes!” Mike’s petitions fell on deaf ears as George dragged him further and further away.

“There’s *literally* no difference!”

“There *is* a difference George! An ice rink doesn’t have a massive, freezing body of water right underneath it!”

The younger boy scoffed, “That’s the thing though, it’s *freezing*, as in *frozen*. Look!” He let go of Mike and stomped his skates against the icy surface.

“Stop it! Stop! Are you *crazy* ?!” Mike covered his eyes, despite being the older brother and in charge of George’s safety, he stood paralyzed on the frozen lake. “Please George! Stop-!”

“Oh, you’re so *dramatic* .” George rolled his eyes and doubled down, “c’mon, you try it now, it’ll prove just how sturdy the ice is.”

“It’s *not* that sturdy and I’m skating back, have fun falling into the ice, I’m out.”

“No you’re not~!” George sang, grabbing Mike's arm and pulling him back as the older boy attempted to escape, “Here we go! Three! Two! One!”

“Don’t—!”

Mike’s cry came too late as George jumped and came crashing down onto the ice. The frozen lake remained intact despite the immense force George exerted upon it.

“See? There’s— nothing— to— worry— about!” George punctuated each word with another jump. A strange sound, like that of a cartoon laser gun, rang out every time he collided with the surface of the lake.

“George, *please* !” Mike begged, tugging his arm out of George’s death grip. “The ice is *splintering*! It’s not gonna hold!”

“It’s— perfectly— sa—” his chants were cut off as the sheet finally gave away under its constant torment and sent both boys into the frigid water below the surface.

George instinctively gasped for air. The freezing ice that had so dutifully maintained him well above the water, had now shattered and abandoned him for testing its fidelity. The lake’s water soaked up his bundled clothes as his mind fired off pulses of hot adrenaline through his body. He struggled to stay afloat but it proved to be a Sisyphean task. The freezing water felt like knives stabbing every inch of his body, pinning him down, paralyzing him beyond recovery. His lungs burned with a fierce intensity as water rushed inside of him. His panic began to set in, his mind turning into a black curtain of fear.

*I don’t want to die, I don’t want to die here, not now, please.*

His body refused, remaining paralyzed, the water in his lungs feeling like blocks of ice as they remained full, no matter how frantically he gasped for the tiny air bubbles around him.

*Please! I need to get out. Get me out! Get me OUT!*

And all of a sudden, everything stopped. The water tugging him down suddenly pushed him up, as though rejecting him, throwing him violently against the icy surface of the lake. The water in his

lungs leaped out of his throat as he heaved, slinking back into the lake and leaving him to a shaky recovery.

George stared blankly at the hole in the lake, his tears seemingly frozen in their ducts.

“M—” he began, though no sound came out, his vocal chords just as frozen as the rest of him.

“Mike.” he whispered.

The lake stayed silent, the surface settling as though another layer of ice had already built up on top of it.

George willed his body to move, pleading with his muscles to push forward and reach for the lake, reach for Mike, but it all remained rigid. He leaned forward and teetered over the edge of the ice, threatening to fall back into the water, until he finally did, only to have the surface remain still.

“Wh-what?!” the cry caught in his throat, “No! Where is he! He’s still in there! He’s THERE!”

The water stayed still. Following his initial command.

*You didn’t want to be in the water. The water won’t let you back in .*

“I want to go in! I want to go in now! I need Mikey out! Listen to me!” he rasped, his voice cracking with each command.

His arms lay wrapped around himself as he threw his body against the solid surface, burning with blisters, his hands became useless in the cold.

“Can’t you hear me?! I said I need him out! Now!”

*If only you’d listened to him before. If only you could control the water.*

*This is all my fault.*

-----

“Are you sure you wanna go in, George?”

“Duh, I came all the way here, I’m not just gonna sit and stare at you.” George snickered, rolling his eyes at his brother’s absurd question.

*Although, I wouldn't mind sitting down and staring out at this view, he thought to himself.*

The lake before him stood like a mirror. Across its expanse was a crystalline blue, as far as the eye could see, a perfect reflection of the clear sky overhead. Along its edges, wherever the water met land, the trees stared back at impeccable depictions of themselves.

The autumnal colors surrounded him like a moat around a castle. Sharp and bold, the golden, crimson, and orange hues, all so brilliant and vivid, scattered the incoming light in a breathtaking spectacle. If not for the cool breeze whipping through his hair, George would be certain that the entire forest had burst into flames.

"Alright, alright, just thought I'd ask," Mike shrugged, offering George his hand, "Come on then!"

George grinned and grasped his brother's hand, stumbling off the dock and into the small wooden boat. The floor dipped beneath his added weight, but steadied itself as the boys took a seat, each



across from one another.

"Alright, just keep your hands, feet, and everything else *on board* , okay?" Mike warned as he untied the boat from the wooden dock, "I don't want you falling over.

George nodded, shifting uncomfortably in the scratchy life vest Mike had forced him into.

"Great, then we're off!"

And so they were.

The helm of the boat cut through the still water, creating small ripples as Mike rowed them towards the center of the lake. Brightly colored leaves fell delicately onto the surface, trailing around the boat like a miniature fleet. Birds camouflaged themselves among the trees as they chirped overhead, twittering along to the tune of the cicadas buzzing.

Mike was crazy if he thought George was *ever* going to pass up a trip like this again.

He shifted in the seat, turning around so that he was facing the open water instead of his brother.

"Try not to move around too much, Georgie," Mike instructed, bringing the oars down and resting them on their locks, "This thing is hard enough to row as it is."

"Oh come on! Don't you do this, like, all the time?" George rolled his eyes as he leaned his face over the side of the boat, playing with the lake's surface as he dragged his fingers along its edge.

"Well that's a one-person boat! It's a lot lighter, okay?" Mike crossed his arms and huffed in response, he wouldn't take anyone's criticism as to how he rowed his boat.

"You're such a baby you know that?" George stood up and grasped the boat's frame with his hands, "you just want something to complain about like always!"

"If I just wanted to complain I'd talk about your smelly breath." Mike snickered.

"Wh—! *Your* breath's the one that's smelly!" George let go of the boat's edge and stomped his foot in indignance. "It's always be—"

"Woah woah woah!" Mike warned, raising his hands around him to stabilize the craft, "be careful! Don't hit the boat like that!"

"So you admit your breath is smelly?"

"No!" Mike slapped his forehead and sighed in frustration, "I never said *that* , you still have the worst breath ever, I bet the fish we're gonna catch today will smell better than your breath."

"Nuh uh," George returned, "I-I bet they're gonna be prettier than *your* ugly face!"

"Fine then!" Mike planted his feet firmly onto the boat and outstretched his hand to George, "let's make a deal then, you have to find a fish that's prettier than me, and I have to find a fish that smells better than you."

"Pff, that's an *easy* challenge," George grabbed Mike's hand and gave it a firm shake, "It's a deal! Winner has to buy the loser ice cream."

"You don't even have any money though."

"That doesn't matter, *you're* gonna be the one buying it."

"Well *someone's* confident."

George smirked, tugging at the straps of his life vest in annoyance as the boat drifted further and further from shore.

"Hey hey! Woah! Don't play around with that!" Mike cried, letting go of an oar to slap George's hand away, "It's dangerous! What if you fall in and it gets loose?"

George frowned, "Nothing, because that's not going to happen! This thing is just itchy and uses, you're just making me wear it so you have an advantage!"

"An advantage in *drowning* ?

"No! An advantage in *fishing* , you idiot! If I'm too busy scratching my arms off in this dumb vest then I can't stay concentrated!" George threw his arms up in exasperation, "I'm not worried though, I could *definitely* beat you, even with an itchy and scratchy vest."

Mike took in a deep breath and sighed, "Yeah, I'm sure you can."

The boat made its way across the lake, one row at a time, and before long they had reached a spot Mike deemed to be perfect. To George, every area of the lake looked exactly the same, he wasn't about to say that out loud though.

He leaned over and stuck his finger in the water as Mike dropped the anchor and began setting up their fishing poles.

"Mhm, it's just as I thought, the water's perfect." He declared.

Mike swiveled his head in George's direction, "Stop leaning over the side like that!"

"But I'm wearing the life vest!" George cried back, gesturing emphatically at the neon colored thing, knocking on it with his fist.

Mike glanced down at the vest and then back up at George, who shot him a challenging look. With a sigh, he turned back to the fishing poles to finish setting them up.

George smiled, considering himself the victor of their exchange, and turned to his side of the boat. He stared down at his reflection in the water, sticking his tongue out at it and blowing a raspberry. The reflection followed suit.

"Alright, here's yours," said Mike, handing him a small blue fishing pole, "Just do the over the shoulder thing I showed you at home, okay?"

He nodded, fumbling with the contraption a bit and nearly dropping it into the water. Mike snickered beside him, casting the line into the lake with ease.

"That's only because you have a *grown up* one," George rolled his eyes, "You're not good enough to do it with a bad fishing rod so you need a professional one to help you."

"Right..." He watched as George lowered the line slowly into the water before the reel got jammed, "Maybe I should try anyways, though, okay?"

George huffed and handed him the rod, refusing to watch as Mike fixed the jammed tool and cast it into the lake for him.

"Guess I just got lucky," he shrugged.

"You did." George snatched the rod back and grasped it firmly with both hands, willing it to remain steady so as to not scare away any catch.

Mike chuckled under his breath, "You don't need to hold it like that, your arms are gonna get tired."

"No they won't, this is how I make sure the rod doesn't fly away once I catch a huge, giant fish."

*Just leave me alone, I'm big enough to get this, go away, I know what I'm doing.*

Mike frowned and opened his mouth to refute but before he could get a word out his rod suddenly lurched forward. The force of the tug nearly sent the boy off the side of the boat and into the lake.

"Woah! What the heck was that?!" Mike cried, battling against the unseen foe, "George! Help me out here! It feels like this thing's trying to catch *me!*"

George immediately dropped his rod and grabbed hold of his brother's wrist. He threw the weight of his body back as he helped his brother reel in his line.

The thing in the water seemed to be just as adamant on maintaining its hold on the line, however, for each tug they gave, it tugged back twice as hard.

"It's not worth it, George! We gotta let it go! If not, the whole thing is gonna tip over!" Mike called over the sound of splashing and thrashing from the creature in the water.

"But it's HUGE! We can't just let it go!" George cried, grunting as he wrenched the thing closer up to the surface.

"It's too strong, George! Just let it go, okay? If I let go and you don't, you'll just get pulled into the water so we have to do it at the same time!"

George nodded, realizing that the battle was already lost. His hands felt sweaty, and his grip on the rod was slipping as it was.

"Okay, ready? Three, two—!" The countdown was cut short as George's released his grip on the pole and the creature gave its greatest tug yet, pulling Mike underneath the water with it.

"Mike!" George shouted as he leaned over the side of the boat where his brother had disappeared.

He shoved his arms into the water, grabbing at nothing as tiny air bubbles emerged all around him. The clear reflection of the sky overhead, which once seemed so serene, only taunted him as it now hid his brother underneath.

He stared at the water in horror, looking around frantically when his eyes caught onto an oar resting calmly in the boat. He grabbed it and stabbed it into the water, hoping to hit something. When nothing happened, he threw the paddle away in frustration, reaching for his plastic blue fishing pole and casting the hook into the lake.

"Please catch him, please, do something," He whispered to himself, his knuckles turning white as they tightened around the pole.

The line remained limp, no sign of even a nibble.

He dropped the rod, letting it fall into the water as he tore the life vest off of himself. He gritted his

teeth as the fabric scratched at his face, stumbling back as it finally came off.

Teetering over the boat's edge for a second gave him a brief moment of reflection before he allowed himself to fall back into the lake with a splash.

*I have to find him*, wrestling the vest off of his arm before opening his eyes and staring into the murky depths of the lake, he dove deeper into the water.

The water was silent. The only movement around him were the dirt and twigs swirling idly by.

*Where is he?*

***He's gone, just like you asked.***

A pair of yellow eyes appeared in the shadows cast by the rowboat. The corners curving upwards as though to be smiling.

*When did I ask that?! Bring him back!*

***I don't think you want to see him now. He's gone just like you asked.***

A sound like a horse's whinny came from the creature and it disappeared again, swimming deeper under the water.

*Wait no! Come back! I want him back! I do! Please!*

***It's your fault, you wanted him gone, I just did like you asked.***

*That doesn't make sense! How is it...?*

*Is it?*

A giant wave of water came from where the creature once was, pushing him upwards till he broke the surface.

"What the hell was that?!" George spit up water as he scrambled to grab the sides of the boat, "What was that thing?! Hello?! Help?!"

His shrieks echoed around the forest, bouncing off trees and reaching ears that would never be.

*That thing took Mike...because I asked it to?*

"Hello?! Water monster?! I wasn't talking to you! I didn't actually want him gone! It was...it was a joke!" He choked out, his arms slipping off the side of the boat. "Bring him back!"

***He's not coming back***

*It's all my fault.*

-----

His stepdad's words echoed through his mind, "*America here we come, whoop whoop!*"

America not whoop whoop. America *very much* not whoop whoop.

He gripped the armrest to the left of his seat till his knuckles turned white, the left one having

already been occupied by Mike's *own* death grip, though George didn't have the heart to point it out to him.

A flight attendant walked past him with a can of soda, treading carefully past his seat. Although it was useless, the can exploded in her face.

"God *damnit*." She hissed under, crushing the can in her hand as she stomped back to the end of the plane, "What is it with this plane?!"

Mike glanced up at the cursing flight attendant before his eye caught George, who was turning different shades of colors he probably wouldn't be able to name if he would've seen himself. He relaxed his hold on the armrest, and put a comforting hand around his shoulder.

"Hey," he whispered, spreading his arms wide open as George tore his eyes away from the seat ahead, "hug?"

George nodded silently and Mike shoved the armrest upwards, pulling George into a tight embrace, "Everything's gonna be okay, alright?"

"O-oka—"

The plane suddenly lurched to the side, narrowly avoiding another lightning bolt, causing half the passengers to tumble out of their seats and a few overhead bins to burst open.

"FUCK!" George shouted, "aren't planes supposed to fly *above* the clouds?!" As passengers screeched all around him, a few began to look out their windows to look for more stray bolts. "This literally makes *no* sense, what the *fuck*?!"

"George, I totally get where you're coming from, but let's try to take some deep—"

"How the fuck is this plane even flying in the rain? Do planes even have windshield wipers? Can the pilots *see* anything right now? How high are these *fucking clouds* that they can't get above them? Shouldn't we've had an emergency landing by now?"

"George—"

The entire back row let out an ear piercing shriek as the doors to the airplane bathroom burst open, a jet of water shooting out and dousing their backs.

"*Oh my gods*," Mike whispered, tightening his grip around George, "George, *please*, you need to take deep breaths or we won't make it out of this thing alive, okay?"

"How the *fuck* is me taking deep breaths going to save our plane from being smited out of the FUCKING SKY?!"

Dozens of small explosions were heard from the back of the plane followed by a stream of curses from the flight attendants. He supposed they wouldn't be handing out refreshments anytime soon.

A lady in the front row stood up and began thrusting a cross into the sky— er— the roof of the plane, screaming prayers incoherently.

The intercom crackled with static before the pilot's voice was heard calmly above the din, "**Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. At this time we ask that you please remain seated and fasten your seatbelts. We've hit some slight turbulence which should pass within an hour. The snack bar will be closed at this time to ensure the safety of our flight attendants,**

**but in the meantime please enjoy the quality selection of movies available to you via our partnership with—”**

*An earth-shattering boom suddenly shook the plane plunging the entire vessel into darkness as more overhead bins burst open, luggage and people were sent flying into the aisles, clogging up the only means to an exit and limiting travel inside the plane.*

Passengers shrieked, hanging on for dear life while the aircraft vibrated, as though it were a cat and the people inside it were nothing but a hairball waiting to be coughed up. The emergency lights flickered for a moment before finally turning on.

**“Uh, Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. It seems that—**

**“We’ve been struck by FUCKING LIGHTNING, Jim!”** A voice screamed from beside the captain, silencing the entire cabin as they all filled their lungs in order to scream even louder than before.

George whimpered, “this can’t be happening,” he buried his face into Mike's shoulder, shielding himself from the world, “this did *not* just happen!”

Mike held George tightly, hopefully reassuring him in the process, “George,” he whispered, “we’re going to die...,” second that's felt like an eternity pass by before Mike spoke up again, “George, *please*, I need you to focus, you can *save* us, okay? You have the ability to do so, you just need to —”

“I have the ability to *save everyone*?! This is *really* not the FUCKING time for jokes Mike, I don’t wanna fucking die *just* as much as the next guy but *how* is this all falling on me exactly?”

“George you— I— we never told you this but— a-and I know this is asking a lot of you, especially now, but we underestimated how mad he would be at you. He’s going to kill you if you don’t do something to fix this.”

“*Fix— ?!*” George pulled away from Mike and stared at him, although he might as well been underwater since he was practically unidentifiable through the tears that blurred his vision, “Please don’t tell me you’ve *actually* lost your fucking mind right now, please say you were hallucinating or sleep talking or something, *please...* please help. I need you right now, I need *Mike* . I-I need to feel safe right now.”

“George, you have to *face* it, okay? We’re *not* safe right now. We’re going to *fucking die*. We will crash and burn and die if you don’t *get it together* and *stop the rain* .”

“Mike—”

“You have to *save* us George, don’t you get it?! You’re our only hope!”

“Stop, just—”

His pleas were cut short as the entire plane surged forward, diving down nose first as it was sucked down by some unseen force, as though gravity had finally decided that enough was enough and it was time for the sacrilegious machinery to return to whence it came from— down to earth at terminal velocity.

Mike cursed under his breath and grabbed George by the shoulders, pulling him upright as the plane tried its hardest to push him back down.

“We’re going to die, Mikey!” George wailed, throwing himself at his brother as the screams of the other passengers drowned into the background, mixing in with the rest of the chaos till they were nothing but a panicked hum.

“We will if you don’t DO something!” Mike responded, pulling George away from him with a grimace, “Fix it!”

“What do you *mean*?! I can’t do anything Mikey! I *wish* I could but I— I’m just *me*, okay? I can’t save you— I can’t save us— and you’re only hurting yourself by thinking that I can.”

“Gods, George, just shut up and focus, okay?” Mike snapped, “You have the ability to control water, you’ve always been able to, just feel the water and make it stop this fucking thing from crashing into the ocean and taking us down with it!”

“You’re *actually* insane. Of course, my luck, you decide to lose it right before we’re about to die. Hey Mike, if you’re still in there somewhere, I’ll see you on the other side.”

“You’re going to be the reason we *die* if you don’t listen and do what I say **now**.”

“What you’re *saying* is to control water, Mike! Are you *hearing yourself*?! ”

“Yes I *know that* you—!”

The emergency exit doors tore away from the plane with a deafening metallic screech and the passengers were thrown towards it violently, the air pressure battling against gravity as the people onboard were tossed around like ragdolls.

“Oh *fuck*! Oh *shit*! Oh my god—!”

“Stop gaping and GO!” Mike yelled, pushing George towards the exit, “If you’re not gonna make an effort to save us might as well get out of here and save yourself.” He spat.

“What the hell are you—?!” The question was cut short as George was sucked out of the airplane, the air catching him just in time to see the aircraft crash into the water and flatten itself against it, as though it hit a brick wall, crushing everyone inside it from the nose up to the tail fins. It left no room for survivors.

George barely had time to choke back a sob before he too crashed into the water. However, instead of flattening against it the water came up to meet him, gently guiding him from his plummet down to earth and into its warm embrace.

*What the fuck?! What is—*

*“You have the ability to control the water.”*

*No. It can’t be.*

George shook the thoughts out of his head. He refused to accept it. He refused to accept Mike’s words, because if they were true....

*This isn’t real. I couldn’t save them.*

But if they *were* true that meant that Mikey was dead. His *parents* were dead. The cursing flight attendant and every other passenger on that plane was *dead* .

*And it’s all my fault.*

-----

George couldn't breathe, he couldn't. God, he was trying, but his thoughts were scattered, barely managing to remain upright due to how much his head was spinning.

This is all too much, it's too much.

His chest was tight, legs aching as though he'd just run a marathon. Had he? He wasn't sure. He didn't recall one, but his mind was so fuzzy at the moment he didn't trust his own memory.

A new scene was coming into view, a bare room with an open window, one giant figure in its center, another on its back, another in the doorway. He knew this scene. He knew how it would play out.

"GEORGE, *SNAP OUT OF IT*, YOU HAVE TO RUN..." His brother's voice seemed to fade in and out as George's breath caught in his throat. For a moment, he was afraid he'd stop breathing again, the sudden and unexplainable shock that shot through his body startling him even more than the winged lady in the room with them. A winged lady his older brother was now attempting to wrestle back to the ground. Something about it...

This was familiar. Why was this familiar?

"Georgie, please!" His mother's voice. "Come to me! You're going to be fine!" Another chord struck within him and his gaze shot back to Mikey, holding the scaled landlady in a chokehold. Landlady?

Ms. Blaise.

He watched as her clawed foot shot towards him, finding himself unable to move out of the way. He let out a gasp as she made harsh contact with his gut, slamming her heel into it and sending him careening back into the windowsill. He heard a crack as the back of his head hit the windowsill, pain blossoming through him.

He felt afraid and he was in pain, just as before, but something was different this time.

He screamed.

It was short, having been cut off as he'd momentarily lost consciousness, but it was enough to ground him.

There was a reason this was familiar, a reason it felt so unbelievably *real*.

It's because it *was*.

Mikey was dead. Really, *truly*, dead. George could imagine it happening a million different ways in a million different scenarios, but that didn't matter. It had already happened. *This* one was real.

And it was *all his fault*.

Or...was it? Mikey... as much as George hated to admit, or to think about it... he'd been okay with it. He'd known what was going to happen, and he'd been there anyway. His confidence - so different from how he usually was; his selflessness... it'd been for him. For him to live on. It was what Mikey had wanted.

That would not be in vain.



And while George understood, he wouldn't let it happen to anyone else.

He *couldn't* .

This was real, but it was *not his fault*.

*This is NOT my fault* .

-----

And just like that the illusion was shattered. He was no longer tumbling out of the window and into the arms of some strange kidnappers, but rather bolting upright, sitting in a patch of grass in the middle of Central Park. He was sweating and shivering, but he was here, he was back in the reality that he knew, in the time that he knew, and everything was going to be fine.

“Shit.”

“I *told* you that was a bad idea!”

“It was a *great* idea! We just underestimated this guy! I mean, can you blame me? *Look* at him! I thought that just the way he passed out woulda done him in!”

George panted heavily as his surroundings started to show up clearly, the haze from the nightmares clearing away.

“Wh-what?” he asked, his tongue feeling like a brick in his mouth.

“There, now we’re gonna have to stand here and wait for the other two while this guy just sits around. Do you know how awkward this is gonna be?”

“And whose fault is that?”

“*Yours!* ”

“Wrong.”

A bright green figure came into view and George blinked blearily up at it. The figure stared back with pinpoint pupils and bloodshot eyes focused directly on him. George screamed.

“Ow, *ow!* What the HELL! Stop YELLING!” Deimos screeched, slamming his hands over his ears.

“I thought the nightmares were *over!* What’s wrong with Dream?!” He yelled, pointing a shaky finger in Dream’s direction, “Why does he look like that?!”

“Oh, shit, I almost forgot about that.” Deimos shivered, looking away from the statuesque demigod. “We just... don’t look at him. Turn your back to it or something, he’s been like that from the start. He was *supposed* to fall asleep like you guys but looks like he had different plans.”

George gulped and grimaced, shuffling his body around so that he had his back turned to Dream. He prayed that whatever nightmares Dream was going through would end quickly so that he’d stop looking like a fucked up taxidermy sculpture.

“So uh...” Phobos shuffled around uncomfortably, “You want some water?”

George nodded silently and held his hand out.

“Well shit, I didn’t think you’d say yes, we don’t have any.”

George tucked his hand away and stared sullenly at the grass in front of him.

“Told you this was gonna be awkward.”

## Chapter End Notes

That's all for now! We hope you at least enjoyed reading this chapter because writing it was an absolute nightmare lmao

The next update is already in the works and is going wayyyyy smoother than this one was, so hopefully no long waits for that one.

We love and appreciate each and every person who has commented during the massive wait, even if we didn't get a chance to respond to every comment! Your patience with us has been astounding, we don't know what we'd do without you!

# Out of sight, Out of mind || Sapnap

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sapnap groaned.

His body felt like it had been steamrolled over by a minotaur- *a really, really pissed off minotaur*. Did they run out of practice dummies in the training arena and decide to use his unconscious body instead? Maybe he was just chunked off of Olympus, à la his dad, and crash landed through the spiked roof of the Ares bunk, after which he was kicked repeatedly by all of its inhabitants and left to die.

Whatever it was: he felt pretty fucking awful.

He took in a deep breath and let it out with a sigh. Even if his body felt a trillion years old and like it belonged in the ground, he still had stuff to do. What exactly? He wasn't sure. But he felt like he did, so he guessed he'd figure it out as he went along.

He opened his eyes and was greeted with a view of the wooden planks from the bunk above him. Plastered over them, with an appalling amount of tape, were a couple of crude crayon drawings of him and Dream. Red and green, side by side.

"Even back then I drew better than him." He chuckled to himself, tracing over the smiley face and fire logo with a shaky finger.

He grinned, remembering how Dream had stolen the crayon box from cabin seven with a frazzled looking Bad chasing after him. Gods, it felt like forever ago. They were about ten and twelve at the time, he knew for sure because it was the very same day that his mom dropped him off at camp and left forever. It was the first of many birthdays he had here in camp, but it was still his favorite one, even if the only gift he got was a bad stick figure drawing of him and his new best friend.

He snapped himself out of his thoughts just as a loud banging on the door woke up the rest of the cabin.

"Let's go, cabin seven! It's breakfast time!" Eret called to the rest of his siblings, "We've got a long day ahead of us!"

The demigods all grumbled, throwing aside their sheets as they each began their morning routines. A bunch of whirring and buzzing was heard from around the room as everyone activated their own contraption that they were sure would revolutionize the way mornings were started. A few didn't even bother with that, simply dragging their feet towards the dining pavilion the second they rolled out of bed.

Sapnap stayed in his bunk, watching as everyone went about their day.

*That's weird*, he thought, watching his siblings file out of the room one by one without so much as a second glance in his direction. *Usually*, someone at least says *hi*.

He shook his head, maybe today was just one of those really good breakfast days and everyone wanted to get first servings.

"If that's the case then..." He trailed off as his stomach let out a growl, "Yup, that. I'm definitely

gonna need some of that breakfast.”

He heaved himself out of the bed and winced as his muscles protested against the action. *Did someone put some weird machine in my bunk to make everything hurt like a bitch?*

He stretched his arms above his head, cracking his back with satisfaction. He shuffled over to a big industrial sink, where a few toothbrushes were sitting in a cup. Too many Hephaestus kids were letting go of the good old fashioned days, Sapnap liked to embrace tradition.

He wet the brush and put an enormous amount of toothpaste on it, grinning at his reflection in the cracked mirror that hung haphazardly above the sink.

“Is that asshole finally gone?” Somebody grumbled from behind him, “Oh thank the gods, I can’t stand him.”

Sapnap frowned, who the hell would be talking shit so openly about one of their siblings? *That’s an asshole move.*

“Yeah, good riddance, maybe those things we put in his mattress finally got to him and made him quit.” Another voice snickered.

Oh come on, *this is so childish*, he rolled his eyes, turning around to tell off his bunkmates, “Come on guys—”

“Hopefully it snapped his spine, this fucker’s been around for way too long.”

“Tubbo, oh my gods—” The other person chuckled.

“I’m serious! Sapnap’s been a pain in everyone’s ass since the day he showed up and you know it!”

Sapnap froze. They were talking about... him? But he’s right here! And Tubbo was his friend! At least... he thought they were friends.

“True, I don’t know how Dream stands him, always buzzing around him like some kind of bee.”

“At least bees do something.” Tubbo huffed, rolling his eyes, “What has this bastard ever done? Seriously! Name one thing Sapnap has contributed to our cabin.”

“He broke the mirror above the sink.”

“I rest my case.”

Sapnap gulped. What the hell were they saying? Was this some kind of stupid prank? Should he just confront them about it or something? They can’t be serious... Tubbo is the type to tell it to his face if he had a problem with him.

"I'm gonna head out now, hope I don't have to see the dumbass there." Tubbo declared, the sounds of his footsteps approaching in Sapnap’s direction.

Sapnap froze. What was he supposed to do now? They'd have to know he heard everything. There's no way they wouldn't. And what was he supposed to say in response to all of that? Should he just run away and avoid them?

Tubbo's figure appeared, rounding the corner without so much as a second glance in his direction. He walked right past the sink and to the doorway, "See you at breakfast!" He called over his

shoulder and slammed the door shut.

*What the fuck?*

That was easily one of the oddest interactions Sapnap had ever witnessed. It *had* to be a prank. Either that or Tubbo just went temporarily blind while walking past him.

The other person left behind sighed and Sapnap heard one of the bunks creak, a telltale sign of somebody getting off of them. He decided that he didn't want to figure it all out with the voice he didn't recognize. Dropping the toothbrush back in its cup, he reached for the door and yanked it open, slamming it shut exactly the way Tubbo had.

As soon as the door closed behind him, Sapnap suddenly found himself in the middle of the dining pavilion. He didn't remember walking there, but he must have if he was there, right? Right. Gods, he really had to get a grip. No wonder people found him annoying, he didn't even remember doing something that he had just finished doing.

The thought made him itch. He glanced around the pavilion, looking for where his friends were, but the seats looked all mixed up. He couldn't even tell which table was which, it was too confusing. *Where do I belong?*

He heard a familiar laugh behind him, but when he turned around it was just some harpy. "Don't you have anywhere to go to? Does nobody want you here?" She squawked, "Sit down and stay out of everyone's way!"

She bared her talons and pushed him, sending him flying backwards. He tumbled head over heels, unable to make top from bottom, for what felt like eternity, before he finally crash landed directly into a seat.

He rubbed his head painfully, trying to clear his blurry vision. The familiar laugh rang out again but this time its owner actually came into view.

Dream was there, sitting across from him, unable to control his contagious wheeze. Sapnap wondered what was making him laugh like that. He wanted to be in on it too!

"H-heh guys, what are we laughing at?" Sapnap stammered, his lips already curving up in an expectant smile.

Dream ignored him. So did everyone else. His best friend leaned to the side and clapped another laughing figure on the back. Who was that? He didn't recognize the new person, for some reason. Something in the back of his mind was telling him that he should.

"You're *such* an idiot." The newcomer spoke in a British accent. A shine twinkled on the lenses of his goggles, reminding Sapnap of a mischievous glint.

"Whatever," Dream snickered, his laughter slowly dying off, "Gods, George, where have you been all our lives, huh?"

George. *The new guy. That's his name.*

"In the UK, duh," George rolled his eyes.

"You know what I mean." Dream scoffed, "This group was in need of someone like you who isn't just a bunch of dead weight."

“Pfft, yeah Dream, my back hurts from having to carry you all the time,” Sapnap chuckled, waiting for the rest of them to join in. They didn’t.

“To be honest, it has been a bit tiring to have to deal with Sapnap lately,” Somebody else chimed in. “I don’t know if I can handle another quest with that muffin, he just doesn’t take things seriously!”

*Bad?! No.* That couldn’t be. Bad would never speak ill of anybody. There was no way. Especially not about Sapnap. They were like brothers, all three of them, they were closer than anyone else in the world. Surely this was some kind of weird joke. Dream would laugh it off any minute now. He was sure of it, he just had to—

“Tell me about it,” Dream huffed, shattering any hope Sapnap had, “He keeps goofing off all the time. It was funny at first, but now it’s not even worth keeping him around for. He treats everything like it’s just a game. Does he even know how many times he almost got us all killed because of his own incompetence? If he’s gonna just walk around with a bunch of unfunny jokes, at least have the skills to make up for it.”

“That’s not very nice…” Bad trailed off, “Even if it is true…”

“Okay, this has to be a joke.” Sapnap gritted his teeth, standing up abruptly from his seat, “*Hello?!?*” he asked, waving a hand in front of Dream’s face, “I know you can hear me! This isn’t funny!” Sapnap could feel his frustration boiling to the surface.

“Come on, Bad, you know you wanna say it too. How many quests have we been on where he was actually helpful?” Dream scoffed.

“You’re NOT funny guys, I know you can see me! George!” He turned to the newcomer, who was watching Dream with a soft smile on his face, “This is the *worst* first impression you could have on a person!”

George hardly blinked at the comment. Or maybe he did, but Sapnap couldn’t see it past those endless black voids that were the lenses of his goggles. Where did he get those from anyways? They were so creepy. It felt like they were sucking him in and not letting him out. He tried to move his hand to tear them off the other boys’ face, but found that he couldn’t. The appendages were glued to the table. And his legs were glued to the ground, and his body was rigid, and now his lips weren’t able to open as Dream continued his rant.

“He’s useless. He’s always *been* useless.” His best friend spat. Was he ever even his best friend at all? “I’ve been trying to get rid of him for ages, ever since his mom dropped him off here! No wonder she wanted to get rid of him as soon as possible! If I could find some camp to leave him stranded in I’d do it in a heartbeat.”

Sapnap had been stabbed more than a few times. He’d been punched and bitten and set on fire and thrown into all types of bloody battles before. One time he had gotten injured so badly that he was able to see past his torn skin and all the way to the bone, fleshy meat and exposed muscle thrumming along to the beat of his heart.

That injury had hurt less.

He felt like Dream’s words were shredding him to pieces, taking on a physical form and grabbing onto his skin, ripping it off of his body. He felt like he was being taken apart, chunk by miserable, *useless* chunk, and he couldn’t do anything about it.

He wanted to scream, but his lips were still sealed shut. His breath quickened as he stared down at the still glued palm of his hand. It really *really* wasn't moving. None of his limbs were listening to him. He was trapped. He had no other choice.

Through sheer brute force, Sapnap tore his hand off of the table, leaving the skin of his palm behind, ignoring the burn of exposed tissue as he lunged at Dream. The moment his hand reached for Dream's face, scratching at the thing that was sending those words against him, they faded through. Dream was just an inch off, just a bit too far away, and Sapnap's hand was clawing at nothing.

Dream snickered. Could he see him? Could he see Sapnap, mute and immobilized, with his hands flapping desperately, uselessly, in front of his face.

"You know what?" Dream tsked, "I don't even care about his stupid feelings anymore. I've been far too considerate of him this whole time. He doesn't deserve it, not even a little bit. Next time I see him I'm letting him know *exactly* what I think of him. That he's a no good, useless, *useless*, *useless*...."

*Useless.*

The word kept repeating itself over and over in Sapnap's head, echoing around in his head, in the voices of Dream and Bad and all of his friends. All of the people he *thought* were his friends. They crashed against his skull, and he felt cracks forming in the bone as they were used like a battering ram. They were trying to kill him. They wanted him dead. 'Useless' slammed against his skull one final time, and it all shattered.

His head exploded, brains splattering everywhere as the word was released out into the open, only to come back down again. Like a bird of prey onto the decaying carcass of some poor desert animal, it attacked him again and again, ripping at the meager flesh that was left.

He was dead, so why wouldn't it stop? Why didn't it stop hurting?

And suddenly the words were gone, and his eyes were blurry, and then they weren't. His head was still pounding.

He was somewhere new now, he was sitting at a bench beside Dream and George. The other two were much closer to each other than they were to Sapnap. As though they were avoiding him.

"So, Chiron gave you guys a quest, didn't he?" George asked, tilting his head in question.

"Yup!" Dream beamed, grinning widely at the new boy. It was a stupid grin. A grin that stretched far too widely on his face and seemed to swallow it whole.

"Oh..." He trailed off. George looked upset. Why was he upset? He didn't even know Dream, why would he care if the son of Athena had a quest? The quest was much *more* important than him. Quests were everything, Dream had been dying for another one for ages. "Who are you taking with you?"

Dream furrowed his eyebrows, considering the question for a moment. Why was he thinking about it for so long? Wasn't it obvious? It would be Bad, Dream, and Sapnap. They promised each other, of course, that if one person would get a quest, it would be a quest for all three of them!

"Well, we are in need of a stronger teammate..." Dream mused.

What? He tried saying the words out loud, but his lips were still sealed shut. Why? Hadn't his

death ended already? That should reset everything. At least, that's how death should work, right? Did Sapnap really die at all? It felt like he did. Why did he die though? He racked his brain for the answers but couldn't find anything.

"We need someone who isn't completely and totally *useless*."

The word struck against Sapnap's skull in a familiar, painful way. That was him. He was a useless one.

"Well, I hope you can find a good replacement. There are lots of strong people here in camp." George replied with a genuine, oblivious smile, unaware of the implications. Sapnap got it though. He understood. He didn't need to see how this scene played out to know.

Dream chuckled, "C'mon, George, don't be stupid. I want *you* to be on my team. You, me, and Bad. We'll be the ultimate Dream Team!"

Sapnap's breath caught in his throat.

*We're the Dream Team*, he thought, *that's us! That's Bad and you and... and me.*

"Are you sure?" George quirked his eyebrows at Dream, "what about that friend of yours?"

"What friend?" Dream snorted, "*Sapnap*? I'd hardly consider him that. He's easily replaceable."

*Replaceable?*

There were two words battling for dominance in his head now, and they wouldn't stop. He wanted one of them to just fucking win already and set him free.

He couldn't do this anymore. He could handle being abandoned, it happened with everyone he cared about and everyone he didn't, it was only a matter of time before it happened here. But he couldn't be replaced. At least let him have that, at least let his absence be felt, at least let him pretend like he carried some sort of significance before he was removed. At least let him pretend like he wasn't completely, utterly, *useless*.

At least let him feel like if he lost his friends, then they lost something too.

"Well, if you say so." George shrugged, "Sure, I'd love to."

"Perfect." Dream grinned again. That huge, impossible, freaky grin that reminded Sapnap of the smiley mask Dream was so fond of. They'd made it together, when they were little, on his first day here. But now the smile that was once so full of childhood nostalgia seemed to taunt him. "I just have one thing to take care of before we can go."

And then Dream did the unthinkable. He took the mask off (when was it ever on to begin with?) and held it in both of his hands. With one swift movement, it shattered, snapping in half in tandem with Sapnap's heart.

He threw the pieces of the mask onto the ground and stomped on them, grinding the mask into smaller and smaller pieces every time he brought his foot down on it. Grinding up the staple of their friendship. And when the mask was nothing but a fine powder, it was blown away with the smallest gust of wind, and Sapnap collapsed to the earth.

*No. I can't lose him. Please.*



He had lied. He couldn't handle being abandoned. It didn't matter how used to it he was. It didn't matter how many schools expelled him, or friend groups ditched him, or parents left him, it still *hurt*. And if the one family, the *only* family, he ever felt secure in would do it too? He would die.

He would die for real. Not some faux death with brains exploding and words that were birds, but a real, true death. He'd die of a broken heart, and it was already happening.

He should've fought harder, he should've done better, he should've listened to them when they told him to stop. He should've paid attention and noticed the signs, *how did I miss the signs?* Sapnap was an expert at noticing the signs, he knew exactly when to prepare for abandonment because it had become such a normal routine to him. But this? This was out of nowhere, this had no basis, he never saw it coming.

*But I should've.*

***It was so obvious.***

Of course it was obvious. They were all in on it, they all felt the same way, this isn't something that just happens overnight.

***They hate you. They always have. Now you finally know it too.***

It wasn't fair. Sapnap never got to keep anything. Why did he ever think that things could get better for him? It was dumb. It was *useless*. And now because of his selfish, useless hoping he was left all alone.

He had lost everyone, and now he would lose himself.

## Chapter End Notes

Hello! Hello! Is I-Cliche! Who is feeling very guilty that we miss again! We try our hardest since one member of our team is dying in school while Grass is busy. But fear not, we will try to head forward and finally and I mean finally update regularly on Sundays!

But right now, here the credit to the people who help us edit this chapter!

Trash\_Kinggg in ao3 and Tumblr (our new member in the team!)

Nightmarewerewolf in Tumblr

(Also, I am a shameless clout chaser-so please spread the fanfic like how you spread honey :3)

(Please, I am begging! ;3;)

# Requiem for a Dream || Dream

## Chapter Notes

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas. We've worked hard to bring y'all this chapter, and alongside it, another gift.

Introducing our new discord!

<https://discord.gg/zb8nTBYgSu>

Come join us and talk about the fic, post art if you want, bugger us about updating and when we're gonna start on the next chapter!

This will be the last update for the year, and man what a year it's been, I hope to see y'all next year and this fic continue onwards.

Happy New Year, from our team to you!

- Cygnvs



Hello everybody, I'm Trash, the newest addition to the team!

Just wanted to say that this was a fun chapter to write for my first time writing for this fic! :D Hope all of you will enjoy it, and happy eventual new year!

The sky was blue, with faint rays of sun peeking behind thin wisps of clouds. It would've been a quaint picturesque scene, the kind that you would find plastered on Hallmark gift cards or even the Windows loading screen. You could even have a picnic with friends or a significant other for that matter. Eating some cucumber sandwiches and enjoying each other's company, it would've been great. I mean, if you didn't mind the smallest insignificant detail that everything around you was about to go to literal hell.

"Everyone," a voice bellowed from within the chaos, "weapons now!"

The camp was overrun with monsters and behemoths from every myth and legend. Even monsters from outside Greek mythology were entering the gates. Snarling chupacabras, shrieking wendigos, and even sphinxes with bared claws were all running amok. As the beasts tore through camp, killing campers both left and right in a wild, untamed frenzy, the shouts and screams from the remaining campers only served to fuel the commotion and chaos that spread through camp like a blazing fire.

As demigod bodies began to pile up across the fields, near the cabins, and even inside the dining pavilion, drastic measures were set in place to prevent further casualties. Flames charred the battleground and the smell of burnt flesh perforated the air. As the amphorae of Greek fire were lit and thrown around the remaining campers to create a defensive perimeter, it only really served to trap them. The burning scent of their fallen brothers only serving to remind themselves of their inevitable deaths. Like a dog backed into a corner, they had no option other than to fight. As the whizzing of their arrows began to die down and the sound of screeching metal picked up, it posed a

dreadful backdrop to the roars of mortals and monsters that echoed in the air. The entirety of the camp's manpower was being burned through, everyone was fighting against too many enemies.

They were falling, and quickly.

Dream stared in absolute horror at the chaos. How could he have let this happen? His mind was still reeling from the failure of a quest he had just been on. He recalled his mother's grey, stormy eyes, how they bored into him as he approached her with news of his failure. How could've things spiral out of control so quickly? It was a simple quest, in and out, 20 min adventure, but everything that could've gone wrong, had gone wrong. As if the hands of fate themselves settled on ruining everything. Which, granted it most definitely was the case, but that didn't lessen the sting.

"Dream, what's going on?!" Dream snapped his head around quickly, almost getting whiplash in the process. Before him stood Sapnap, his eyes filled with distress, his carefree demeanor gone.

*When did he- was he always there?*

He shook his head, trying to clear the fog in his mind. "The camp is..." Dream whispered, trying to explain the situation, himself even, but he was silenced as a hellhound steamrolled a camper from the Apollo cabin not too far from them.

"What happened to the camp?" another voice came from his right. This time George, standing next to Sapnap, hand covering his mouth, eyes welling up with tears.

*What can I even say to them ?*

"Dream," a third voice called to him, noticeably farther than the first two, "there you are!"

Turning around, he saw Illumina rushing towards him. His eyes were wide and his mouth was trembling. His clothes were all torn, singed, or hanging on by threads and his body was littered with burns, cuts, and bruises. It was a sight to see the head of the Hermes cabin brought down to new lows. A sight not many would wish to see.

"Dream!" Illumina's voice brought him out of his stupor, "thank fuck I finally found you!" He grabbed his arms, enveloping the son of Athena into an affectionate hug. Would this have been any other time, Dream would've been dying to talk to Illumina, moreso even get a hug from the guy, but right now he just wanted to be left alone so *he could think*. Even *breathe* for gods' sake. With everyone popping up all around him, not forgetting to mention the smoke and fumes coming from the battle field, he felt trapped, walls closing in on him, *claustrophobic*.

Reeling back from his hug, Illumina piped up, "I'm going to have to make this quick, the camp's gone to shit," his brown eyes scanned over the rubble, fallen buildings, crumbling cabins, and giant holes dotted the landscape. As he finished his inspection, he refocused his attention onto Dream. Dream could only stare back at him through his porcelain mask, afraid that he couldn't meet the other man's eyes should he take it off.

*What's wrong with me?*

"We're under attack from the gods and they're *pissed* to say the least." Illumina's voice cut into him like a steak knife, "the thing is, we have absolutely *no clue why* !" Each new statement stabbed him with guilt, If Dream didn't know any better, it sounded like Illumina was trying to make him feel bad. *Just curl up on the spot and die*.

"Why would the gods be mad at us?" Sapnap asked from behind, "Why now? We didn't- we didn't even do anything!" He looked at Dream, swiping at the sweat and grime, he grimaced as it stung

his eyes on it's way across his face. *I'm sorry Sapnap.*

A bunch of people now began to group around them, the few remaining campers that weren't on the battlefield holding the line or too injured to stand crowded around Illumina, like a ship caught in a storm, they sought after their lighthouse. As they gathered, they brought with them a cacophony of noise, drowning out the words of the hero they so desperately sought.

"Look!" Illumina shouted above the rabble of the crowd, "I don't know- nobody knows!" He scanned the faces that stood before him and fixed his gaze onto Dream. The son of Athena almost crumpled on the spot. "Dream," Illumina uttered with underlying determination. With hatred, with fear, and even desperation all hidden within his words, "we need you right now, we need a plan!"

He could feel his guilt grow inside him, a weed that's too stubborn to die.

*Yeah we needed a plan, he thought, we needed a plan 2 seconds ago, of course I already knew that! Why can't they see I am trying and they weren't helping by stating the fucking obvious.*

Shame and guilt turned to frustrating and anger. The faces surrounding him, some filled with pity, others with contempt, and fewer still shattered with soulless eyes and open mouths served to fuel him. *I've gotta get outta of this, but I don't know how.*

"Another thing," Illumina's voice interrupted his thoughts, "Techno can't be found anywhere, we're not sure where he is." Illumina quieted down, letting the news of the camp's greater warrior permeate the crowd. Many became silent, some even allowing silent tears to fall from their face, aware of the implication that Illumina's message carried.

Behind his smudged porcelain mask, Dream eyes widened and his heart sped up. *Why is- no it can't be!* He wouldn't ever admit the panic that settled into him, much less the true fear that ravaged throughout his body, but he felt it clear as day. He was the only one who could.

*Technoblade was dead.*

"We have to think of something!" Sapnap shouted beside him, "we can't leave and let everyone die here like animals sent to the slaughter!" grabbing his weapon and gearing himself to fight, he turned to face George. "C'mon water boy, do something!"

George looked at him with an air of incredulity, "Sapnap" he muttered pinching the bridge of his nose, "this is a rhetorical question, but are you a fucking idiot? You're going to get not only yourself, but me, Dream, and hundreds of others killed!" George grabbed Sapnap's wrist, holding him back from blindly charging onwards. Dream appreciated the fact that George cared for Sapnap but somewhere deep inside him chastised himself for thinking about friendship at the worst possible time.

*Sapnap is about to run head first into battle and all you can think about is the power of friendship?*

He seriously needed to get a hold of himself.

Sapnap glared daggers at George, "what?! You think standing here like sitting ducks is gonna solve our problems?" He pulled away from George and faced the battlefield, "people are dying there as we sit here and talk like we can afford to do so-"

"We need a plan Sapnap," Illumina cut in, bearing the full brunt of Sapnap's fury and taking some of the heat off George, "it won't do us any good if you die trying to save others."

Sapnap's eyes softened and his shoulders slumped, turning to Illumina, he couldn't muster any hatred towards the camp's unofficial leader. "Okay," he quietly whispered, "what's the plan?". Taking a second look at him, Dream noticed that his eyes had lost their blazing intensity and were instead replaced by the remains of smoldering embers.

As a heavy silence fell across the group, all eyes looked over to Dream. He gulped especially when Illumina's eyes bored into him, not to mention hundreds of other eyes from behind him, waiting no, hoping for him to come up with a plan.

Nonetheless nothing came to him. A thick fog clouded his thoughts and he could feel a headache starting to form as he tried to formulate one. It's edges blurry and hard to comprehend, he might as well been planning for failure.

"Right", he started, his voice shaky and his body trembling, "we should... we should" placing his fingertips at his temples he tried to concentrate but nothing manifested. "Maybe if we..."

*Why bother, if I disappointed mother I'll probably disappoint them too.*

It certainly didn't help the fact that everyone was watching his every move. Eyeing him like predators observing their prey. Waiting. Biding their time until he gave them what they wanted.

*I have nothing.*

"Dream look," Sapnap placed his hand on his shoulder and faced the son of Athena, "I know you're thinking up of something that'll fix everything right now, but- MINOTAUR!" Sapnap's impromptu pep talk was cut short as an enormous minotaur came howling straight towards them.

The minotaur had to be at least 20 feet tall, towering over them like a lighthouse on a rocky shore, it was certainly no mere beast. Behind the monster, more started to come their way, and by the looks of it, they were hungry.

"Run."

He grabbed Sapnap by the collar and George by his wrist, he motioned for Illumina to flee as he took both of his friends with him. "Run!" he repeated, almost damaging his voice, he hoped the urgency in his tone would get the two of them moving and luckily it did. The three of them bolted downhill and deeper into the camp.

Dream could feel his heart ramming in his chest and the stomach growls of hungry beasts from behind him. How could he get them out of this? *Is there a way out of this?*

Before he could continue his train of thought, he noticed in the distance a building lit up with Greek fire. Flames spilled from the windows and all that remained was the blackened statue of a familiar owl.

*Mom's cabin.*

Dream's body moved before he could think. Not giving the slightest warning to his two companions, he ran straight towards the building.

"Dream! Where the hell are we going?" George shrieked as he somehow dodged incoming claws from an empousa, and sliced his sword into the creature, effectively turning it into a puff of golden dust.

Dream didn't say anything as he continued to run, putting a gap between himself and his friends.

His entire focus was on the structure in front of him, *his home in front of him*.

He slowed down, not being able to breathe in deeply without his nose burning. He stared, slack jawed, at the ruins of the Athena cabin. Were all of his siblings dead? Truthfully, he didn't want to know. It would be a reminder, a reminder of...

"DREAM!" he whipped his head at the deafening shriek.

*Shit.*

Turning around, he saw both George and Sapnap surrounded by monsters. Sapnap had a wide slash across his chest, it tore through his shirt, dark red blood soaking his white t-shirt. Meanwhile, George was bleeding from his forehead, a smaller, but deeper gash, slicing through his temples. The sight of both wounds made his heart clench.

*Godsdamnit, what am I doing? I need to help them!*

He reflexively grabbed the hilt of his sword, but instead grabbed a fistful of air instead. He looked down in confusion, furrowing his brows as he stared at an empty belt. His sword was gone.

*Where the hell..?*

Panic filled his mind, maybe he could cause a distraction so Sapnap and George could run away? He tried lifting his legs, but his body refused to listen. He felt like he was gradually getting heavier, his breath came out in short bursts, just standing still felt like he'd finished running a marathon. His thoughts became muddled and he could barely comprehend what was happening in front of him.

He crumbled to his knees, the weight of his body becoming burdensome until it was almost unbearable. He could only think in bits and pieces, he watched helplessly as the last of the camp's inhabitants were either cut down or ripped apart.

Before fading out, most likely from the fumes he inhaled and the gruesome sight before him, his eyes landed on George and Sapnap.

Sapnap's wound was bleeding rapidly, his complexion became paler than the porcelain mask Dream refused to take off, and he looked ready to pass out. George on the other hand stood fared better but only marginally, he stood, weakly defending against the increasing hordes of monsters rapidly approaching them. The beasts didn't even go for the kill, they were merely toying with them at this point. Playing with their food, knowing full well that they won.

"Come now, Son of Poseidon, strike us down!" one hollered, giving a deep bellowing roar as he and his companions encircled them.

George glanced wildly around, and landed on Dream's defeated form. He stared at the masked demigod, he sighed, knowing it was useless to him at this point and let go of his sword. It fell with a dull clang and he drew his last breath, for a sword had entered his abdomen, penetrating him through and through with no change of recovery.

"You're such a dick..." George uttered, his last words a low whisper before the monster removed their sword, letting his body fall down limp to the ground. His blood surrounded him, flowing from his stomach as the light left his eyes and his figure remained still.

"Here," the monstrous beast chuckled, "get the fiery one too, maybe they won't be alone when they go to the Underworld."

Dream watched as the last of his family was brought down. He couldn't even scream as he shut down and collapsed.

[...]

As Dream came to, he knelt in the ashes the Camp-Half Blood. The bodies of his fellow campers, *his family*, lied dead all around him. He looked up into the sky, trails of smoke snaking above him.

“Why...” he choked, gulping for air but only breathing in ash and smoke.

“Why only me? Why am I the only one alive?” He silently spoke to the sky, like a prayer, he closed his eyes and tried not to let the tears fall. He seldom prayed, not even to his mother, but now he felt like every word uttered should be served on a silver-platter.

Not soon after, he opened his eyes and sighed, feeling the ash and smoldering remains of the camp stick onto his face, underneath his mask. As he surveyed the carnage, he winced as he saw dismembered bodies and charring remains. Swiping his ash covered hand across his mask, he clouded his vision as he stood up, not wanting to see the ruins of the camp.

It was funny in a way. Instead of the unbearable, crushing weight of before; he felt absolutely nothing, almost weightless actually. He wished for nothing more but for one of those monsters to come and skewer him, end whatever misery of a life remained for him.

Glancing around, he noticed an eerie silence.

*What was taking them so long?*

He was a banquet to be devoured. Okay, perhaps not a feast but a light snack for sure. He had no plans, no weapons, not even the will to carry on. What good was a child of Athena without a plan of action? He had nothing.

***He had absolutely nothing.***

A gust of wind came from behind him, it seemed to have come from the deepest and coldest pits of Tartarus.

*Maybe I'm already dead and this is my journey through the Underworld?*

A shiver ran through his body, goosebumps following suit. He removed his mask, trying to see if a monster had decided to give the demigod mercy and end his existence.

Instead of the cold, lifeless corpses of his friends or a monster that was going to chomp down on him. He saw spruce trees dusted with snow in front of him. Dream quickly turned behind him, and instead of the burning remnants of his former home, there was an icy lake that expanded into the horizon.

He shakily stood up, cool snowflakes found themselves melting on impact with his skin. He wobbled unstably for a second, before turning towards the forest ahead of him.

*I don't usually follow unknown forces in places I suddenly appear in, but..*

Uncertainty was all he could feel before setting out into the forest.

Not having much of a destination in mind, he shivered as his torn sweatshirt didn't offer much protection from the frigid cold. His breath came in visible puffs. Snow crunched from underneath

his heel, his boots sinking downwards with each step.

He walked as the harsh wind blew against his back, making him stumble lightly. Cursing as he brushed off snow from his pants, his eyes glanced upwards, now noticing rising smoke coming from the distance. Not from a battle from what he could tell.

He picked up his pace, if there was smoke, then there were people! His eyes landed on a lone house. The house was two stories tall with even taller trees surrounding it. He can see smoke rising from a red brick chimney.

He walked over to the house, a sense of familiarity coming to him. Nearing a window, he looked inside to see a family.

“Honey, save a seat for him...” a warm voice came from inside.

His eyes moved around, trying to catch every detail of the house and the family within. The faces were hard to see, but he could see that the family was preparing for dinner.

“Drista can you get the extra plate please?” a sweet voice called out, Dream’s chest filled with a sudden tightness.

He didn’t notice the warm tears running down his face and dripping down his neck onto the snowy ground. His heart clenched as he watched the scene unfurl before him, a sense of belonging and displacement made him feel numb.

Not long after, he heard the now familiar roar which made him freeze. The sound he had so desperately tried to bury deep within his memories but somehow reappeared every now and then and made his body freeze in paralyzing fear.

*No- not this...*

“Now, let’s- DRISTA GET AWAY FROM THE FIRE!” A voice once honey sweet, now laced with terror pierced the cabin.

Dream wanted to break the window but he couldn’t move, he was frozen in place. Nothing he could do would change anything. He was nothing else but a bystander, watching a tragedy unfold.

***He couldn’t do anything***

Inside the house, Dream could hear the screams and prayers of the dying. Flames licked the wallpaper, and swallowed anything in its wake, the people inside cried in horror as they were being burnt alive. Dream couldn’t tear his eyes away, for the fire was a musical and Dream the audience. Until nothing was left, the house now a husk, as its inhabitants were nothing more than dust.

He finally broke down, he fell, letting out an ugly, gut-wrenching cry. He could feel his mask crumble in his fists, his face scrunched in pure agony, the porcelain mask now gone, blown into the howling wind. His own mask torn down, years spent crafting himself a facade gone within the blink of an eye.

“Please” he shouted, “why them...Why! Them!” Feeling his throat tearing itself apart, he nonetheless continued to scream.

As seconds turned to minutes, and Dream’s voice became a shell of its former self, he was done. He wanted nothing more than to throw himself into the cold and never get up, but there was that familiar fuzz in the back of his head. However louder now, and much more like a faint buzzing.



His vision swam as he clawed at his hair, wanting whatever was tormenting his mind to *just stop* . He turned back from whence he came, and instead of the backdrop of trees. He saw an opening to a familiar-looking volcanic room.

A whirring of machines and automatons overcame the howling wind of the forest, and Dream slowly came back to himself. Confusion was the first thing he felt, before a sudden realization flooded his senses.

He quickly moved into the room, pushing past junk and random pieces of material he probably couldn't even name before coming upon a large figure cursing obscenities at a machine.

He found the hunched-over god standing before a tv-like device.

"This stupid shit- work godsdamnit!" he gruffed out, hitting the machine with a massive hammer.

"Hephaestus!" He yelled at the metalworking god. The god jumped in shock and looked around, before his eyes landed onto Dream. Raised an eyebrow, he inspected the demigod that was somehow lost in his quarters.

"You again?" He bellowed out, "what're doing here more-or-less in the flesh?" Hephaestus shuffled over to his workbench, "and why do you look like you crawled all the way here from Tartarus" he motioned towards Dream's appearance.

Dream glanced down, noting all the blood, viscera, and monster dust that coated his torn, singed, and bloody sweatshirt.. He truly couldn't look any worse.

Dream shook his head, "that doesn't matter, I'm here to ask how the hell do I get out of here?"

Hephaestus huffed with a glare "well, first off, yanking one that's not supposed to be dreaming *out* of dreams is tricky"

*Dreaming? Oh, fuck I remember now* Dream smacked himself in the face, as the sudden realization hit him. "I've been dreaming, this entire time..." The amount of stupidity he felt in that moment made him want to kill something right then and there, specifically two things. "When I get my hands on those two-" he hissed, but Dream had to stop himself from continuing on his tirade. The god in front of him stared at him with a bemused look, "look kid I don't know what you got yourself into, and I don't frankly give a shit, but you look like you're gonna have a conniption fit" the god groaned as he got up.

"So why don't I snap you out of here?" Hephaestus said with a grin as he grasped his hammer.

Dream's eyes widened, "I- maybe there's an exit the other way" he nervously chuckled, but before he could take another step he was out like a light.

[...]

Dream startled awake with a groan. His head pounded, sharp and heavy. It felt like someone was shaking the inside of his skull, or maybe hit him over the head with a celestial hammer.

"Fuck-" he wheezed grasping his head, feeling the cool porcelain of his mask in one piece.

He opens his eyes to see golden eyes staring back.

"Oh, Dream. You're finally awake. You were trying to cross the border, right? Walked right into that Imperial ambush, same as us, and that thief over there," Hephaestus said, not worried that

Dream may have a concussion. He gave the god a deadpanned look despite having a mask over his face, the god could probably sense his shitty mood.

“Welp, seems like you don't need my help anymore.” Hephaestus turned, leaving Dream sitting there on the park's grass.

“Look, Dream is awake!” He looked over to see George, seeing George smile made his heart flutter but he pushed it down, not having the energy or brain capacity to pay any attention to it.

“Awww fuck me,” one of the two large figures observing Sapnap turned, “the green one woke up!”

“I guess one is better than none, brother”

Dream rested his head on his hands and began to rub his temples, trying to massage away the headache.

“Can you guys be quiet for just a second?” Dream said, trying to bring his previous bloodlust for the two minor gods back again.

Phobos and Deimos surprisingly quieted down and Dream let out a sigh of relief. His headache started to die down but his temples still persisted with a slight throbbing.

He had a feeling this favor he called in from the god might have future consequences, but right now he couldn't focus on that, he had to make sure his friends were alright. He stood up shakily, reaching for George, which the other was slightly surprised by the sudden weight; Dream made sure that George wasn't hurt anywhere. He glanced to where he remembered the sword pierced George's stomach. Nothing but a blue shirt and grass stains were present, he wouldn't admit it aloud but he was relieved.

“You good Dream?” George muttered, worry etched into his eyes despite being obscured by his goggles.

Dream nodded, turning away from George as he analyzed his next set of actions but not before he noticed Sapnap's collapsed figure and graying skin.

*No! No fucking way! Sapnap had to wake up!*

Before he could mutter a word, much less approach him, the two gods chuckled before him.

“Your poor friend,” Deimos mocked.

“He fell victim to his own fears,” Phobos cackled.

The two gods walked over to Sapnap, who had tears running down his face even in his comatose state.

“Don't touch him!” George yelled, still grasping on Dream's shoulder. The two gods edged closer to Sapnap, not even bothering to heed George's warning.

“Don't lay a FUCKING finger on him you bastards!” Dream growled, rising to his feet, his patience waning.

“Not so fast,” Phobos said sardonically, a shit-eating grin etched onto his face. “This one is ours, nephew, he lost the game, and so he pays the price.” The two grabbed Sapnap by his shoulders and

lifted his unconscious body like a burlap sack. Rage bubbled in Dream's chest

"Don't touch him!" he gasped, reaching for his sword. Relief flooded him as he grasped the Thracian steel blade and forced it out of its sheath.

He sprinted to the three of them, his focus on his best friend's face, set in excruciating pain, Dream winced as he approached them. *They couldn't take him away, they can't!* Even as he sprinted across, readying his blade, Phobos grinned with a deep-seated malice as he snapped his fingers and...

They were gone.

# Can't spell friendship without 'end' || Dream

## Chapter Notes

First update of 2021, let's go!

Also, don't forget about our Discord server if you'd like to join!

<https://discord.gg/zb8nTBYgSu>

Enjoy!

Dream's sword sliced through the air where Deimos and Phobos once stood, adrenaline still in his veins, he could feel his breathing come out in short, erratic bursts. His eyes were wide and his brows remained high, almost meeting his hair at the top of his head.

*I can't believe it.*

He kept swinging at the empty space before him. Beads of sweat manifested on his arms as he exerted himself to his limit. Only managing to swat the unfortunate flies that crossed his path. Eventually, he stopped, realizing that the act was pointless. No matter what he did, he couldn't bring him back.

*Sapnap's... gone.*

Dream let go of his sword as he fell to his knees, ignoring the sharp pain that came from falling onto the gravel studded path, and stared in disbelief. Where his best friend once stood, now only footprints remained. No signs of a struggle were present.

*How could there be?* Dream thought, *I wasn't quick enough to reach him, let alone fight off those bastards that took him away...*

He gripped the hilt of his sword and swiftly returned it to its sheath, gritting his teeth as he rose to his feet, muttering a low "fuck" as he turned his sight away from the offending area.

He ran a hand through his hair and sighed, a small wail reverberated around the inside of his skull. It kinda sounded like an annoying house fly that, no matter how hard it tried, couldn't fly through an open window and leave. He tried shrugging the noise off only to realize that that pesky little housefly was the one and only son of Poseidon, currently having a meltdown on the grass beside him.

"OH MY GOD! OH MY GOD! OH MY GOD! DREAM, WHAT THE FUCK DO WE DO?!" George shouted right beside him. He threw himself to the ground, pounding the dirt with his fists, and just kept getting louder and louder. No doubt bringing in unwanted attention from the mortals that wandered the park.

*The mist must have worn off,* Dream thought, irritated that the third member of his questing team was reduced to being as useless as a wadded ball of gum.

He turned towards the *unshakeable* son of Poseidon and scowled. George looked like he was about to go into cardiac arrest. Hell, he was probably pissing himself as he kept asking him what to do

about Sapnap. In all honesty, Dream probably would've found it funny if it weren't so pathetic.

*And if Sapnap were here...*

"Would you get it together already?!" Dream snapped, giving the shorter demigod a small kick in the ribs in order to get him to stand up, "Just shut up for a second, okay?! Can you do that for me? Can you shut the *fuck* up and let me think? If you're just gonna be useless then at LEAST don't weigh me down!"

Dream slipped on his mask and pulled up his hoodie to obscure his face, and for good reason too. Anyone at that moment could've seen the venom and vitriol that was dripping from his mouth as he stood shouting at the son of Poseidon.

Not wanting to take it sitting down, George stood up and glared at him, trying to bore holes in that porcelain mask of his that Dream always loved to hide behind. His early onset panic turning into white, searing anger.

"Chill?!" He yelled at the excessively green man, "You want me to chill while Sapnap just *literally* disappeared into thin air?!" He waved his arms madly around him, as if his hand motions would somehow make the bastards appear with their friend. "He's gone, Dream! He's gone and all we did was watch!"

If Dream hadn't had the willpower of a minor god boiling deep within him, he would've slapped George clean across the face for even suggesting that he didn't try everything to reach Sapnap in time before Phobos and Deimos disappeared. He stared back at the screeching man and tried to return his glare with one of his own. It would've been intimidating had his mask not been in the way, but he achieved a heavy silence nonetheless, hopefully getting his point across all the same.

After some time, he pinched the bridge of his nose and released a frustrated sigh in irritation.

*George is right*, he begrudgingly remarked, *Sapnap's gone and we have no fucking clue where he could be... we're fucked.*

A seconds of silence, where Dream allowed himself to feel hopeless and lost, passed uninterrupted before the cogs in his head began to turn. They needed a plan and fast, they *had* to save Sapnap, no question about it. Dream absolutely failed him. His best friend, ever since the panda-loving demigod set foot into camp, was now gone because of him.

He turned to George, all the malice and frustration quickly fleeting as he tried to somewhat compromise with the son of Poseidon. They couldn't keep standing here like sitting ducks, they needed to get Sapnap back. As he glanced around the park, he spotted the door to the Underworld that they tried to open before and suddenly he had an idea.

Dream walked past George and, even though he didn't want to admit it, he didn't want to fuck this up for him either. He marched through a short section of the park, George following close behind him, and finally stopped when a seemingly normal rock wall stood before him. Any normal self-serving mortal wouldn't even bother to look twice, but a demigod with the blood of Olympus flowing through their veins could see what a mortals' eyes couldn't. The surface of the wall had shifting glyphs and a few phrases in Ancient Greek would come into view, only to disappear a few seconds later.

Dream somewhat anxiously shifted on his feet, he had mixed feelings about this place. Taking off his bag and shuffling through it, he found what he was looking after a few seconds and plucked a simple flute out of the unorganized mess. Unfortunately for them, Sapnap was more musically-

inclined than him, but he would have to make do. As he was about to place his lips on the wooden flute, he felt a presence manifest behind him. He glanced over to see George peering at his instrument with a bemused expression.

“What’s with the flute? You gonna busk for spare change?” he joked, completely ignorant as to what Dream was about to do.

It honestly irked Dream, as he could already feel the frustration from earlier beginning to creep back into his mind, “I forget how useless you are when it comes to the mythological side of things.” George made some muffled noises that Dream couldn’t care less about as he proceeded to explain, “in order to open the door to the Underworld, or the one in Central Park at least, some form of music has to be played to be granted access to travel through”.

With that, he brought the flute to his lips and started playing a slow, somber tune that—oddly enough— was taught to him by Tommy after returning from a certain quest that had gone terribly wrong...

He could feel George’s eyes burning holes on the back of his head, hoping that it was because of his unfamiliarity with the concept of opening doors via music and *not* because his flute playing sucked. *Wouldn’t it just be my luck if this shit didn’t work after all my troubles?*

As he finished the tune and removed his lips from the flute, he heard a quiet gasp come from behind him. He turned back to face George but saw that his attention wasn’t on him anymore. Following his line of sight, he glanced back towards the wall and, instead of a smooth gray rock with shifting glyphs, there was a tall foreboding door. The Ancient Greek previously written was now replaced with hand-engraved etchings into a dark wooden frame. Scenes of grotesque torture and screaming souls dotted the door as a faint golden light illuminated the anguish and suffering. Focusing his vision upwards, he could see that the golden light came from above the door as a sign in Ancient Greek hovered above it..

*“SORRY FOR THE INCONVENIENCE, DOOR IS CURRENTLY CLOSED FOR MAINTENANCE”*

Dream stared in utter disbelief, the door that’s supposed to take you down to *literal* hell is down for repairs?!

*You gotta be fucking kidding me. I shouldn’t have said anything.*

For the second time that day, he felt like the gods were simply out to give him a hard time. *I see the theme of this quest is “fuck you Dream!”* Next god he comes face to face with, he’s gonna have a few choice words to say to them.

Snapping him out of his plans for retribution, George spoke out from behind him, “Well, c’mon,” the shorter demigod urged, “Aren’t you gonna open the door?”

Dream turned around and looked at George like a man who just witnessed someone drink salt water to quench their thirst.

“Weeeell,” he dragged out, “in case you’ve suddenly fallen ill with a rare case of illiteracy, the sign above the door says we can’t get in,” he mocked as he pointed towards the glowing letters in Ancient Greek.

George squinted his eyes at the sign above the door, somehow not having witnessed it beforehand, and walked ahead past Dream. The green man watched in slight amusement as George started

pushing against the door, grunting and heaving as he tried to get the damned thing to budge.

It continued on, probably long than it should've, and Dream had to intervene.

“What in the *fuck* are you doing?” He asked, starting to get tired of the whole act.

“Trying— *mmph* —to open— *mmph* —this stupid— *mmph* —gate to hell!” George gasped for air and took a step back. “What else does it look like?”

Dream snorted and looked eyes through his mask with George, “Well, it looks like an idiot trying to open a door that can’t be opened.”

George glared daggers at Dream as the man placed his hands on his knees, giving himself a quick breather. “What else are we supposed to do then?” he said in between breaths, “do you have any other bright ideas or should I try to bust this door down and actually be useful?!” George growled, lowering himself and plopping down onto the grass, his back to the impenetrable door.

Dream rubbed the bridge of his nose and placed one hand on his hip, “do you have any other plans or are you simply going to exhaust yourself further trying to accomplish the impossible?”

“Do you?!” George barked back, still laying down and replenishing his strength in order to try to bust the door down for a second time.

Dream felt like he was babysitting a toddler, “Gods help me, why are you my partner again?”

“Uhh, I don’t know,” George shot back, “probably because some old decrepit mummy in a dusty attic told me to be with you?”

Dream’s retort died in his throat as he realized the guy had a point, “look, just let me form a plan while you, while you... uhh, while you stand there and look pretty. Pout your lips and flutter your eyes, maybe you can attract the attention of a minor god to come and help us.” George gave a brief exhale as he sat up and crossed his arms.

“Fuck you.”

Dream ignored the shorter demigod and began to look around the door, trying to find any possible way to open it, or at least get some answers as to when it would be fully functional again. George in the meanwhile, got up and started to make his way around, feeling quite useless as Dream tried to solve their problems yet again. He was wondering where the hot dog vendors would be stationed near this area of the park when his eyes spotted something in the grass where Phobos and Deimos disappeared.

He walked closer to the spot, being somewhat cautious in case Phobos or Deimos came back for them out of the blue and attacked him while Dream was distracted. Finally arriving at his destination, he bent down, hesitantly picking up what looked to be a map. It was worn, and rough around the edges, rolling in on itself everytime George tried to read it.

As Dream was met with no luck inspecting the hellish gate, he quickly realized that George was being quieter than usual. Looking around, he failed to find George seated near the door and instead found him a few yards away holding what appeared to be trash in his hands.

*I tell him to do one simple thing and he goes off and wanders off to Hades knows where.*

“Hey George,” he announced as he approached the wandering man, “what did I say about standing there and looking pretty?”

George rolled his eyes and ignored Dream's comment, "look at what I found sitting in the grass," he showed the aging map to Dream, being careful with it due to its current state, "I think it's a map."

Dream huffed and was about to discard whatever George was holding until he took a second glance at what he was seeing and saw a sentence with two familiar names scribbled towards the bottom.

*If lost, please return to Phobos and Deimos at New York City, USA; Empire State Building; 600th floor, Thank you!*

"Those idiots!" he quickly snatched the map from George's grasp, feeling excited, giddy even that they might've gotten a hold of something that could lead them to Sapnap

"Is this map gonna be of use any for us?" George asked, feeling Dream's excitement and giddiness spread to him like an infectious disease.

"It very well could be" Dream hummed, "it could possibly help us save Sapnap!"

"Fuck yeah!" George shot his fists into the air, "do you know how to read it?"

"Pfft," Dream brushed off, "of course I know how to read a map-"

When he unfurled the map, his smile disappeared. There was nothing on it, No landmarks, no legends, not even a compass rose, it was completely empty, save for the return message scribbled at the bottom.

As George began to wonder why Dream suddenly became quiet, he stood on his toes and looked over the other man's shoulder, bearing witness to the same empty map that the son of Athena had just unfurled. He felt a stone drop in his gut as the hope of finding out where Sapnap could be disappeared.

"Welp," he grumbled, "at least now we know map's useless-"

"Hold on, we still don't know that the map-"

"Riiight, until we figure out how to read a map with no directions, landmarks, or legends, I seriously doubt we're gonna get anywhere." George kicked a patch of dirt beside him, "unless that map suddenly shows us where we need to go, it's completely useless."

"Maybe," Dream added, "or it could be a map that adheres to some ancient rules from myth that—oh wait. You wouldn't know a thing about that would you?" He smirked deviously at George, trying to provoke the other man. He didn't know why he was doing it but it just felt like everything going on was too much to handle and giving out snarky replies was his go to for some relief.

"It's not my fault I don't know anything!"

"Sure it isn't," Dream rolled his eyes, "it must've been some minor god then, huh? He whisked you away and prevented you from learning about your extended family?". The way George acted seemed to always get on his nerves. It was unlike anyone he's ever met, *currently barring Phobos and Deimos of course*, it irked him to his wits end.

"Just sit down okay? Let me do the work," and with that he waved off George, hoping to finally get some peace among all the commotion.

George reached for the map that was yanked out of his hands moments ago, "I want to help you



Dream.”

“Help by doing what?” Dream held firmly onto the map, “yelling into my ear everytime I find something that could help us?”

“I just want to help-!”

“You’re just gonna fuck it up! Let me figure this out by myself!”

George poked Dream’s chest and reached for the map, both of them now holding onto the map “how’s that been working out for you? I can’t imagine being useless while losing my best friend.”

Dream curled his fist, and bared his teeth, it was the second time that day that it took all of his willpower to not punch George right then and there; but he knew deep down George was right.

Guilt washed over him but it was quickly replaced by a cold anger. He tried slapping George’s hand away, but the stubborn son of Poseidon held on. Going back and forth, they pulled at the map, cursing each other out until they both heard a quiet rip come between them. Looking down in mild horror at two halves of a map, they angrily shoved each other in opposite directions.

“Fuck you!” Dream spat.

“Fuck you too!” George growled back.

They both stood there glaring at each other, not daring to move a muscle. Until George, sharply turned away from the tall man, his ripped portion still in hands, and started walking towards the opposite side of the park.

Meanwhile, Dream kicked a tree, hoping the dryads at home wouldn’t know about it, and took a moment to calm down. He felt sick. He had a pit in his stomach forming, a vile mix of guilt and hopelessness, the painful knowledge he had failed *him*. He’s been trying to ignore it this entire time but George was right, he failed Sapnap. His best friend was gone because of him and his stupidity. He groaned as he knelt on the grass, not only realizing that he failed Sapnap, but he’s also failing the camp. His home, a place where he knew he was safe, even admired by some, and it was all in jeopardy because of him.

He couldn’t truly understand why he was paired with George, taking over his life like he has. He was loud, annoying, and he made it his life’s goal to make Dream’s life a living hell. Deep down however, he knew he was being a bit of a dick. Everyone at camp had some tragedy or another happen to them, every person had a story to tell. George’s story wasn’t exactly the most common though.

Kidnapping George and telling him that his brother’s death wasn’t something to cry about was probably the worst impression he could’ve made.

George was thrown into the deep end without having learned how to swim, and so Dream had to be his lifeguard for the time being. Just as long as they get out of here alive, they’d have to be around each other for as long as this quest lasted. Then they could go their separate ways.

“Ugh, I fucked it up, didn’t I?” He hit his head against the tree, ignoring the pain that the rough bark made against his scalp, “fuck!”

He knew what he had to do. Dream rubbed his forehead and sighed, he darted towards the general direction he saw George go, he knew he couldn’t have gotten far and he was shortly proven correct when he noticed a hunched down figure near a small pond.

He couldn't see his face, but he could see George's shoulder shake slightly.

*Godsdamnit*

He slowed down, careful when approaching the awfully quiet demigod and stopped behind him, "George," he called out softly, not wanting to startle him.

George turned slightly, his eyes puffy and his face a bit red. *Dear Zeus*, Dream felt terrible, George didn't look like he usually did when he cried, it was coarser this time, raw tears fell down his face and Dream couldn't turn away.

He bit his lip, rubbing the back of his neck as he mustered up the courage to say something, "look," he began a bit shakily, "George, I'm sorry. I've been a grade-A asshole since the day we met, and a simple apology might not suffice for the time being, but I don't want to hurt you anymore." He took a brief pause before continuing, "I know it's going to be hard for us to get along, but I want to do this the right way... for Sapnap." George's eyes widened in surprise, most likely expecting another barrage of insults to come his way from the son of Athena rather than an apology. Dream took a deep breath, gods this was embarrassing, he shifted awkwardly as he waited for George's response.

Wobbling as he tried to stand up, George turned away from Dream, he wiped his face and pulled his goggles over his eyes while nodding lightly, "yeah," he spoke softly, "I'm sorry too. For being a bit of a dick to you and doing more harm than good." George gave Dream a small smile as he approached the other man, "and I agree, we should try and work together and save Sapnap." He gave a big sigh, glad that things began to lighten up.

"Well c'mon then," George began, dusting himself off and pulling out his piece of the map, "standing around here looking like a pair of weirdos won't do us any good." Dream smiled, glad to see that George was feeling better.

*I couldn't bear to see him like that*, he found himself thinking, *for the quest of course!*, he quickly added, ignoring the slight heat that filled his cheeks.

As he pulled out his piece of the map, he felt an attraction towards George.

As in a *literal* attraction, he was being pulled into him by some unknown force. Glancing down, he could see both pieces of the map straining to meet one another. He looked at George and by the looks of it he also had the same idea. They brought the two pieces together, and like two souls entwined in fate, the two pieces became one, the formerly ripped map was made whole again.

They held their breath, as they continued to hold it, not only did the map put itself back together. It was starting to show them something, it was like looking through a screen, grainy footage covered the map and showed the two sons of Ares.

*The Dumbass Duo; Deimos and Phobos.*

They were near it seemed, he could tell it was New York based off of the buildings and of all places they were near a...

Walmart parking lot?

The image slowly began to fade until it was replaced with a blinking red dot and directions towards the images they just witnessed.

Dream couldn't help but smile, he placed his hand on George's shoulder, "we're gonna find

Sapnap, and get rid of those assholes once and for all!” George looked a bit startled, probably not used to receiving physical comfort from Dream, but to be honest he quite liked it as he smiled in response and nodded.

George handed the map to Dream, letting the green man get a closer look when all of a sudden the directions flickered and disappeared. They both looked at each other with confusion and slight alarm until George grabbed onto his side of the map and the directions reemerged.

“Well,” George uttered, glancing towards Dream, “that’s a slight hiccup, but oh well?”

Dream sighed, wishing that he had Sapnap’s photographic memory, “c’mon then,” he said with no time to waste, “let’s go over here and memorize this thing.”

George groaned in annoyance as he followed Dream under the shade of a nearby tree.



Meanwhile nearby, Phobos leaned on the side of their 1971 Dodge Charger as he picked the dirt from underneath his nails with a Thracian steel bowie knife.

*What’s taking Deimos so damn long? We should’ve left ages ago,* he thought as he moved onto the next nail, *dumbass is probably getting propane instead of gasoline,* he grumbled.

He was almost done cleaning all of the nails on his left hand and was about to start with the right until he saw a figure coming into his peripheral, *no scratch that,* there were *two* figures approaching him.

*Oh for fuck’s sake.*

# The Odyssey, the witch, and the audacity of this bitch

## Chapter Notes

Sorry for the long wait between chapters 17 and 18, our writers are undergoing demanding classes as the semester ramps up. We hope this chapter, and what lies at the end, makes up for it.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Shit,” Phobos growled, sheathing his blade as Dream and George grew nearer, “how the *fuck* did they find us?”

He jumped into his car, trying to rev its engine and force the few drops of gas in the tank to combust, but it ultimately proved useless. Frantically searching around for alternate means of escape, he came up with nothing and, in a rage, slammed the steering wheel. Cursing Deimos’ name, it only truly served to draw the demigods’ attention towards the vehicle instead of making his brother manifest beside him.

“Motherfucker,” he dropped his head, letting it rest against the car’s horn, increasing its volume, and alerting everyone within a five-mile radius of his position, “next time I’m bringing Enyalios, at least he’s smarter than a bag of wet mice.”



Off in the distance, as the shrill screech of a car horn continues to blare throughout the parking lot, Dream suddenly looked down, briefly glancing at the map in both of their hands before turning back up to George.

“Finally,” he shouted with a sadistic glee, “we found the fucker!”

The son of Athena eagerly let go of the map, its contents erasing quickly, as the green-hooded man made a run towards the only muscle car in the parking lot. He made sure that George was holding onto his corner, lest they need it later, and sprinted towards Phobos.

As he approached one of the twin sons of Ares, he sent a quiet prayer to his mother, thanking her for allowing the secrets of the map to reveal themselves to him.

*Idiot, he thought, of course, it would take two people to figure out the map. Phobos and Deimos always travel together, don't they?*

In hindsight, it was quite simple, a bit too simple for it to be worth Dream causing George to break down and cry.

*That was probably not my best moment, but it all worked out for the best.*

*Right?*

For the map to work, you only needed two people to grab onto separate corners and the map would

then reveal to you whatever you needed at the time. Live-time video tracking of a target? Sure. Directions leading to the current position of a kidnapped person? Definitely. Hotel? Trivago.

It was so easy to figure out, that Dream felt like kicking himself at his own incompetence. Even the bit about the self-erasing map wasn't a problem at all. If you both held the map *together*, nothing would change. Everything would be where it was and you could easily seek what you wished for. Sure, this would mean he and George would be close to each other as they tracked Sappnap down. It was a bit awkward at first, knowing that George was crying a mere five minutes earlier, but they kept their cool and even preserved through.

Anyways, shaking his head to clear him of his thoughts, he got closer to Phobos, scoffing as the god was trying to hide inside of the car, locking the doors and rolling up the windows in a feeble attempt to keep out the son of Athena.

*Pathetic*, Dream thought, *utterly pathetic*.

As he arrived at the car, he could feel his anger boil deep inside him, whether it was due to some effect Phobos was currently having on him, or the belief that Sappnap was finally at an arm's reach away, ready to be saved, he didn't care. He only knew that he was leaving with Sappnap and Phobos would be sent home in a body bag.

He could feel the pit in his stomach begin to lift as he thought of rescuing his best friend. No longer would he ever doubt him, Dream would make sure that Sappnap always knew he was loved and welcomed by him.

*Don't worry buddy, I'm here, and I'm not leaving without you.*

As he was getting ready to pry Phobos out of the car, he could feel George's presence manifest behind him, it was hard not to notice how out of breath he was.

"So," George grunted, still breathing heavily, "are we just gonna bang it until the fucker comes out or?"

Dream was about to jape about George's physical condition but decided otherwise, *no point in doing so when we're so close to saving Sappnap*, he thought, also knowing that Sappnap wouldn't like them arguing, even if he wasn't with them at the time.

It was at that moment that the car grew silent and the god inside disappeared.

"What?!" Dream couldn't help but shout in shock, "he was just- he- wh- UGH!"

The green man ran around towards the driver's side window and slammed his fist against the pane of glass. Broken shards scattered about inside the vehicle. A crouching figure quickly emerged out from under the dashboard.

"Hey hey hey," Phobos cried, shaking off shards of glass as he stood up, "it's a rental, we're gonna have to pay for that."

The god stepped out of the driver's seat, not as frightened as before but more so annoyed at the condition of the muscle car, sighing deeply as he raised his hand to gently caress the hood of the vehicle.

"Where's Sappnap?!" Dream shouted, startling Phobos as the blond demigod grasped onto his sword's hilt, mercilessly pointing the Thracian blade towards the god's neck.

Phobos tried to back away from the furious, battle-raged son of Athena, only for his retreat to be blocked by the car he so deeply cherished.

“Sapnap huh?” He mocked, opting to use his twin brother’s impeccable skill of ignorance as he tried to maneuver himself around the car, only to be blocked by Dream at every opportunity, “I have no clue what you’re talking about.”

Dream’s right eye twitched, his emerald pupils becoming a dark and foreboding viridian, *did this asshole really think he was that dumb?* He could feel his blood begin to boil, *who the FUCK did he think he was?*

“Sapnap,” he growled through clenched teeth, “the guy you fuckers kidnapped-”

“Is he really that dumb?” George asked beside him, his question making his presence known to Dream, as the son of Athena almost forgot him in his entirety, “are you sure we’re dealing with the right one? Maybe it’s Deimos is who we want?”

“They’re both dumbasses,” Dream remarked, taking his eyes off Phobos to quickly look at George, “but it’s definitely *this one*,” he prodded Phobos’ jugular to accentuate his point, “that we want.”

Phobos’ eyes widened in, what even Shakespeare would consider ironic, fear. The god began to squirm beneath Dream’s blade as all eyes soon befell upon him. Dream kept his hand steady against the trembling throat of the bastard that took his friend. He could feel George’s attention divided onto Phobos’ and what Dream would do to the god of fear.

“Look-” Phobos gulped, or at least he tried to, “you’re not going to kill me,” he chuckled nervously. “I know you’re a smart kid Cream, if you kill me now you’ll have to deal with Deimos, and let’s just say, he’s definitely the brawn if I’m the brains.”

Dream barked a dry laugh in response, “oh, really?” he grinned, donning his mask to hide his true emotions from the god, “I’m definitely going to try.”

As the mask’s band clasped behind his head, he let out a brief sigh, everything from today was weighing on his mind, bringing him down like an overburdened mule. He was *so damn close* to saving Sapnap. He just needed to pry the information from Phobos and he would be done. He might not even bother fucking up the god if he cooperated with him.

"Let's try this again," he decreased the pressure, "where'd Deimos go?"

"Out for milk, I haven't seen him in years." Phobos snarked, which resulted in Dream pressing the Thracian steel deeper into Phobos’ jugular.

"Cut the shit, where is he? And where's Sapnap?" Dream uttered violently.

Phobos gulped.

"He's out getting gas," the god acquiesced, “dumbass didn't fill the tank before we got to Central Park."

"And Sapnap?"

"He's here," Phobos licked his lips, his eyes darting to his right “knocked out, in the trunk.”

*Bingo*, Dream thought triumphantly.

As the confrontation lingered on, Phobos continued to stare at Dream, his eyes reflected desperation, not too dissimilar to that of a rat caught in a trap. A vile rodent that solely wished to claw its way out of the undesirable situation it was experiencing. That was until his eyes suddenly seemed to calm down, relax even. Phobos' line of sight passed over Dream's shoulder. As if he was staring off into the distance for something...

Or someone.

Dream tensed in realization, the only thing that could save Phobos now was-

Dream's body moved on its own as he sprung backward, he shoved himself in front of George; the sound of screeching metal on screeching metal reverberating through the air. Dream strained his arm into a comfortable position as he looked at their unexpected assailant.

*Oh for fuck's sake*, he growled mentally in frustration, *not this shit again*.

Deimos' weapon was an interesting one to say the least. He didn't carry the conventional sword, or even less common weapons like axes and daggers, he carried a black pair of jagged gauntlets. As he stared down the length of his sword, Dream reasoned that they must've been made from the same material as his own weapon, on account of the new scratches that adorned his Thracian blade.

*Godsdamnit*, Only weapons made of the same material could damage one another, the only exception being those made of Imperial gold and Naxossi adamantine. All other metals, including Celestial bronze, Stygian Iron, Thracian steel, and Delossi Silver, couldn't damage one another.

*Great*, he thought, *not only do I have to go 1-on-1 against tweedle-dee over there, but if I somehow fuck this up, I'll be left without a sword and get sliced into ribbons*.

"What are you waiting for CrEaM?!"

Knocking him out of his thoughts, Dream looked up to face Deimos. Having already pushed George to the side, and hoping that he could defend himself against Phobos with his own blade, he charged towards Deimos.

The god of terror anticipated this maneuver and dodged in time to avoid a slash to the chest. Unfortunately for him, Dream had originally planned for his first attack to miss and spun around to drag his blade across Deimos' legs, quickly retreating to a safer position as he finished carrying out his attack.

A loud yelp emanated from the son of Ares as droplets of golden ichor began to flow from the god's thighs. Unable to soothe his wounds as his hands were concealed by the sharp claws of his gauntlets, the god cursed, instead choosing to ignore the brunt of his pain and refocus his attempts on the blasted son of Athena.

"I can't wait to shatter that swirly toothpick of yours Bream!" The god of terror charged towards the son of Athena, "or better yet, I could use it to pick out the gunk underneath my fingernails. No point in wasting such a fine piece of steel."

Dream's vision could only be described as red. Were it not for his intense drive to rescue Sappnap, or to a lesser degree, make sure Deimos didn't come after George should he fail to defeat him, he would've lost all sense of self-preservation.

To insult his blade was to insult Dream. He viewed the sword as an extension of himself. A constant reminder of all that he lost on his quest to retrieve his mother's cache of artifacts and

irreplaceable mementos. It was a reminder of her love for him. How despite failing his quest and only returning the one measly sword he managed to salvage, she still viewed him as her son.

He looked at his sword, his jaw clenching tighter with every new scratch that manifested on his blade.

*I'm going to fuck you up*, he thought briefly as he braced himself against Deimos' impact. He held his blade tightly, Deimos managing to create new scratches every time Dream shifted his sword to defend himself. It appeared that they were at a stalemate as neither wished to move in case it gave their opponent the opening for an attack. That was until Dream let go of his blade.

Confusion spread across Deimos' face as Dream, in a calculated motion, fell to the floor and slid underneath Deimos. As he manifested on the other side, the god of terror had no time to react as Dream raised his leg and swung with all his might into the direction of the gods crotch.

An ear-splitting screech emanated from the god as he crumpled in on himself, cursing loudly as he endured the pain that even he would not have wished on his enemies. Deimos shouts were followed closely by the signature clang of Thracian steel as it hit the concrete floor of the parking lot, Dream hastily picked up his blade, quickly inspecting it for any new scratches before placing his boot onto Deimos' chest and swinging his sword to point at Deimos' jugular.

*"Yield,"* the son of Athena commanded, his green eyes somehow possessing glints of red whilst a deadly aura surrounded him, "yield, and I won't go through the trouble of gutting you like a fish-"

His authoritative spiel was cut short as the son of Ares, in painful gasps, attempted to laugh beneath him.

"You really are your mother's son Dream, I can even see a bit of Ares in you, nephew," the god's face was pained, but yet, nestled in between the layers of arrogance and egocentricity, Dream spotted the smallest kernel of respect.

"Unfortunately for you," the god suddenly wheezed, "you're not a son of Ares."

Mustering all of his remaining strength, the god of terror raised his gauntlets and descended upon the demigod. With his left hand, he grasped Dream's Thracian blade, and with his right, he closed tightly around Dream's ankle.

The son of Athena shrieked painfully as blood began to flow out of the cuts in his leg. His shredded jeans became blood-soaked within seconds, not aided by the fact that he was thrown to the side as the god of terror began to stand, ignoring the green-hooded man as he approached his brother, Phobos, and an increasingly-worried son of Poseidon.

"DREAM!"

He could hear George shout his name, somehow being able to comprehend it through the haze of pain his ankle was causing him.

*NO*, he shouted internally, *I can't lose George, not after I lost Sapnap.*

He stood on his good leg, trying to ease the pain caused by the gashes in his other. He looked up ahead of him, the older son of Ares approaching the red rental car. As his vision began to be cluttered by dark spots, he could make out Deimos grabbing George's blade and throwing the demigod to the side, much to his brother's glee.

The pain in Dream's ankle intensified, "GEORGE!" he found himself shouting, "get to- ARGH!"



He couldn't bear it any longer, the gauntlets must have cut deeper than he expected, maybe even getting down to bone. He tried to remain standing, but it was a futile effort as he found himself collapsing onto the ground.

“GEOR-”

He couldn't finish his sentence and was beginning to fade out. His stream of consciousness was breaking apart and he couldn't even keep his eyes open. As quick as a wink, the son of Athena passed out, agony still etched onto his face, as his friends fended for themselves.



*“Dream”*

He could hear his name, but it sounded faint, as if he was submerged underwater.

*“Dream, please!”*

“Drista, five more minutes,” he found himself replying to the disembodied voice, “I’ll get the keys in a bit and drive you to school but give me some more-”

*“DREAM”*

The son of Athena suddenly woke up. Scanning his surroundings, he tried to take in everything around him but he instead came across a pair of dark brown eyes obscuring most of his vision.

The eyes in question belonged to a certain son of Poseidon who rested a mere two inches away from his face.

“George!” He got up into a sitting position and hugged the other demigod, crushing him in his embrace as the memories of battling Deimos and collapsing afterwards returned to the forefront of his mind. One memory in particular grabbing his attention.

He let go of the other demigod, peering down towards his ankle and still seeing the bloody mess that were his jeans, he raised his pant leg, bracing himself for the worst, but upon revealing the site where his injury should be, he saw no wounds or fresh gashes. All that he witnessed were faint scars, discolored from the rest of his body and a numbing sensation near his ankle.

Come to think of it, he didn't feel any pain, he actually felt warm. A little hot perhaps.

*What the-*

Dream's eyes widened and he suddenly realized what happened.

“George!” He scrambled back to the son of Poseidon, “tell me exactly what happened!”

The smaller demigod was caught off guard by how quickly the son of Athena's demeanor changed, but nonetheless shared his perspective of recent events.

Dream listened carefully, eyeing George intently in case he thought the other demigod was omitting anything of interest.

After George was done reiterating the past five minutes, Dream stood up and glanced at the car.

*Just as I thought.*

He knew he had passed out from the tremendous pain in his ankle and left George to fend for himself and Sapnap. Luckily, Dream must've returned the favor to Deimos, since the god decided the gash in his thigh was severe enough to warrant a retreat and leave behind their friend.

As he walked towards the front of the car and inspected the dashboard, he popped the trunk open and found himself relieved to have been cared for by George.

*Okay, maybe he's not as useless as I had originally thought.*

The fact that George knew to pour nectar down his throat and force him to chew ambrosia said it all.

*Despite me acting like a piece of shit to him, he really doesn't want to see me die.*

He opened the trunk and before him was Sapnap, curled in the fetal position and still trembling in what must've been his fear sequence.

Dream's heart sank as he saw the state which his best friend was in. He picked him up and laid his back to the side of a tire, making sure he wasn't in an uncomfortable position.

He was about to get up and search for his bag when George came behind him with a bottle of nectar.

"Here," the son of Poseidon spoke, worry etched into his face as a pained expression was still plastered onto Sapnap's, "please wake him up."

Dream nodded, and much like what George did to him, he made sure Sapnap ingested the nectar that he poured into his mouth. Giving him as much as he needed before he could burst into flames.

It only took a few seconds for the nectar to work its magic and Sapnap began to flutter his eyes.

"Hey," he whispered groggily, "what'd I miss?"

In that moment, Sapnap was enveloped into a rib-crushing embrace. Both Dream and George surrounded the man in what could only be described as a near-lethal bear hug.

"We love you Sapnap!" Dream found himself shouting as the trio kept hugging it out, "never forget that!"

Tears threatened to fall from the son of Hephaestus' face, but he held up his facade and hugged his two friends closer.

"I know..."

After what seemed like an eternity, all three demigods got up and began to plot their next course of action. Before Phobos and Deimos had vanished, they had left their rental, and a half-full jerry can behind. With them finally out of the way, Dream walked towards his bag and pulled out a map of the continental United States.

"Okay," he began, "the Orphic door to the Underworld was clearly a bust, so we have no choice but to head to California to go through the other one." He pointed at a map and highlighted two paths leading towards the Golden state, "we aren't exactly on a time crunch here, so we can pick out which route we want to take."

Dream dragged his finger across two particular roads on the map. "The way I see it, we've got two

options, we can go around the mountains, head down towards Texas and avoid the Rockies, or we can drive through Colorado and travel faster, but be more at risk from monster attacks as we travel up and down the mountains." He paused for a brief moment before continuing. "It'll be safer through Texas but much faster with Colorado, it's honestly up to you guys, what do you think?"

In that moment since waking up, Sapnap piped up. "Would we go through Houston if we took the Texas route?"

Dream looked down at the map, making some mental calculations before responding.

"Uh, sure. It's a little outta the way but we can fit it in-"

"I come from Houston," Sapnap cut him off in excitement, "it's my hometown. Maybe I can give you guys a tour, get some supplies for us. It is the medical capital of the world after all-"

"I was thinking more so Colorado," George spoke up, "If we get caught up with another member of ligma-"

"It's LoMG," Dream corrected.

"Eh," George shrugged it off, "Ligma LoMG, to-ma-to to-mah-to, it doesn't make a difference," he refocused back onto the map, "anyways, what I was saying is that if we get caught up by another one of their members we might get held back. Tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum back there cost us the better half of a day, who's to say the next guy-"

"Or girl!"

"Thank you Sapnap, who's to say the next guy or girl won't take even longer?"

"I hope she's hot-"

"Not important!" Dream cut in, tired of the conversation going nowhere, "both of you shut up and let me think."

"We'll hurry up," Sapnap impatiently interrupted, "we're gonna waste any gas dumb and dumber might've had idling here and we only have like \$20 between the three of us."

"Okay," Dream pulled out a pen and began writing on the map, "this is what we'll do..."

### **[Chapter End - Audience Takeover Time]**

#### **Chapter End Notes**

Once again, the time has come where you can decide what will happen next. Leave a comment on whether you think the gang should travel through Texas, Sapnap's one true home, or climb up through the Rockies, where anything could really happen, the choice that gets mentioned the most will determine which way the story will go. The length of the story will not change, so don't worry that you'll be missing out on content if you vote one way or the other. We'll do a few of these throughout the fic and the consequences will range from big to small, so make sure to think ahead before you

vote.

Until next time! :D

## [Hiatus announcement]

### Chapter Notes

A long overdue explanation.

I don't want to waste anyone's times with what I'm about say so I'm going to cut straight to the chase. Classes have been demanding for all of us and some of us are applying to college/in college and the work never seems to end. We didn't offer an explanation earlier and we're sorry for that.

The fic will hopefully start to progress by late May, if not sooner, but don't get your hopes too high  
- *we have somewhat of a bad reputation with uploading on time.*

Hopefully you guys can forgive us for what we've put you through. It was a mistake on our part, and hopefully won't happen again. Should another hiatus seem to approach, we will warn you far in advance.

We don't plan on abandoning this fic, and we will see through it to the end.

- Cliche, Trash, Cygnus

## [Indefinite Hiatus]

Long time no see, but to not waste anyone's time we're going to cut straight to the chase.

We are going on an indefinite hiatus. Classes are as tough as ever and coupled with the fact that our motivation has plummeted to an all time low, we will stop updating *Wits, Fire, and Sea* for the time being. It'll most likely take months until a new chapter is released and most likely in the year 2022. Sorry to have kept everyone waiting for a chapter that never released.

We wish everyone the best.

- Clichewho\_69

- Cygnvs

- Trash\_Kinggg

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!